

Verse-Musings

ON

Nature, Faith, and Freedom

BY

John Owen

Author of "The Skeptics of the Italian Renaissance," "The Skeptics
of the French Renaissance," "Evenings with the Skeptics," etc.



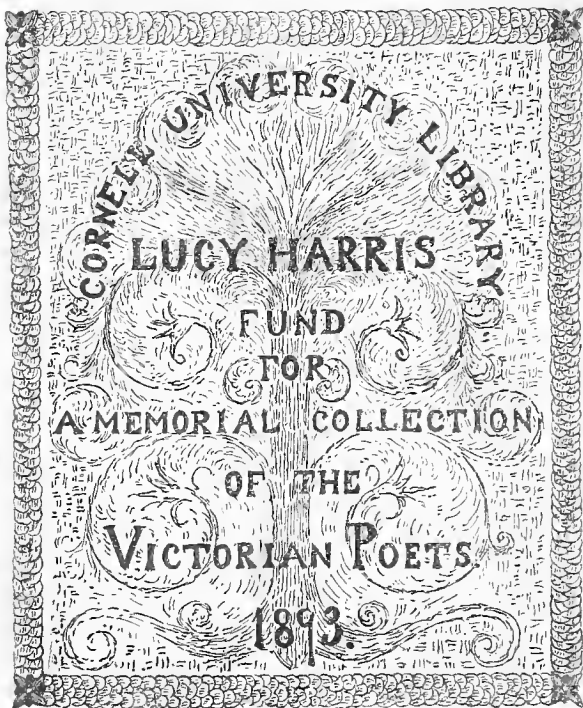
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ON
NATURE, FAITH, AND FREEDOM

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I.
NATURE.

UNDER THE ASPENS IN JUNE.

'NEATH the trembling rustling shade,
By the quivering aspens made,
Supine on the lawn I lie
Drawing from the green-fleck'd sky
Dreamy fancies in attune
With the drowsy warmth of June.

Softened is the noontide sheen,
By your shivering cloudlets green,
Quickened seems the turf below
With flickering fretwork—shade and glow—
A living, tessellated floor
Forming, changing evermore—
Blue sky above, green earth beneath
With waving festoons ye enwreath ;
Filling the sun-paled azure air
With flashing gems and emeralds rare,
While on the green earth-floor ye trace—
Adapting sombre hues to place—
In shadows darkling as they move
The glories of the heaven above.

Like crisp waves on sunlit seas
Ruffled by the summer breeze,

So your surface gently fretted
By soft zephyrs close besetted,
Breaks in myriad efflorescence
(In the wind's decrease and crescense),
Of swift-changing light and greenness,
Glancing with a wild unseenness,
Each bright leaf in swift gyrations
Flashing brilliant coruscations
As it glistens sunward turning
And an instant's sunlight burning,
One small unit in the mazy
Dance of foliage bright or hazy,
On its flexile stem revolving
By its frenzied twirl resolving
Every kind of leafy antic,
As if, sun-struck, it were frantic.

Anon your aspen storm is lull'd,
And your green wavelets' tints are dull'd ;
Drooping hang your leaves all mute,
From the fretful wind's pursuit :
Still'd, until their rustling high
Waning as about to die,
Sounds but as a maiden's sigh
When her lover comes not nigh.

Transient lull ! new energy
Soon throbs through each aspen tree.
Stalk and stem and leaf now quiver
With a crisp and crackling shiver,
Like the rain drops in a river,

Now again is heard your roar
As of waves upon the shore—
Rising, falling, in a sinuous
Cadence, as the wind continuous
Plays among your leaves and branches
With its wayward lawless franchise ;
While to each degree of fluttering
Follows its own key of muttering,
Loud or soft, or deep or shrill,
Till once more the wind grows still ;
And again the lull succeeds
Each wind-gust in sequence breeds.

Thus to every transient impulse,
As the wind with loud or dim pulse
'Mid your mobile leafy surges
Its eccentric courses urges,
Ye respond with eager utterance
Bristling tones, or hushèd mutterance,
Like the Æolian sentient harp-string,
Which the breeze makes flat or sharp sing,
So in mingled tones and keys,
Sounds your quire of voiced-leaf trees
As though each leaf were a tongue
Agile, flexile, deftly hung,
Adding by its single tone
To the whole grand unison.

Aspens fair and mobile, ye
Whispered thought convey to me,
As ye yield to sun and wind,
As ye all your pleasure find,

In response with vivid senses
To sweet Nature's influences :—

So to Nature would I give,
Every sense by which I live,
Sympathetic with each mood,
Seeming ill or real good ;
Joining Nature's loving union,
Merged and lost in her communion,
One unit 'mid the myriad throng,
Myriad-tongued that swell her song.

*TO A YOUNG HOUSE-MARTIN PICKED
UP DEAD UNDER ITS NEST IN
THE MIDDLE OF NOVEMBER.*

· POOR half-fledged morsel of mortality,
Reft of thy nascent frail vitality,
 Born all too late ;
Born when the summer sun had ceased its shining,
Born when the year's life-forces were declining,
Into a cold world ushered unrepining,
 Hapless, untimely fate !

Warm'd into life when spent the wingèd prey,
For thy race fitted through each sun-glad day
 Its food to give.
Void was the cold September air, and dumb
Of all the summer music buzz and hum,
Which the rathe first-born of thy nest bade come,
 Pursue, enjoy, and live.

Born when thy mates already wings were pruning,
Born when loud marshall-calls they piped attuning
 For the far South ;

Instinct's almighty impulse through them thrilling,
And with its mastery their bosoms filling,
Little they reck'd the deprecating trilling
Of thy baby-mouth.

Abandoned by thy parents, playmates, all
Unheeding of thy tender nestling-call,
Thou diedst alone ;
Still cowering in thy cold forsaken nest,
Still for thy parents looking sore distress'd,
To come as heretofore when hunger press'd
They heard thy plaining tone.

Ah ! who thy anguish may avail to tell,
So late emergèd from the parent shell,
Then reft of care ?
Who may record thy pangs, so fondly nursed,
Then left to die of hunger, cold, and thirst,
Who tell the spasm when thy small heart burst
With want and sad despair ?

What boots the question what thy lot had been,
Hadst thou the earlier sun of August seen ?
How swift thy flight ?
If thou in beauty hadst thy mates excell'd,
If high thy shape and plumage they had held,
Or if of thine own brood all e'er unshelled,
Had keenest been thy sight ?

Emblem dead bird art thou of what we find
Through Nature's realms, nor rare among mankind :
Born all too late

Are oftentimes men who tardy slink to life,
All spent the wealth with which their lot were rife
In earlier times, and unavailing strife
And death is now their fate.

Of births abortive, destinies unripe,
Of Nature's thwarted works and aims, sad type,
Alas, thou art !

Why grace and beauty does she oft bestow—
As on thy frame she made these feathers grow—
And then destroy them with a sudden blow
And reckless ruthless heart ?

But while through Nature we trace everywhere
Failure, frustration, careful lack of care
And heedful heedlessness—
"What matters?" asks some thinker with insistence,
"For all things gendered there is not subsistence
'Tis but the law of struggle of existence,
Than that no more no less.

What recks one nestling 'mong the myriad brood
In summer hatch'd, matured on summer food,
Then eager wings
Outstretching shared their elders' autumn flight,
And now in southern climes taste new delight,
Where days are ever warm and sunshine bright,
All birds to music stings ?"

Had this plea satisfied thy yearning heart,
When boding woe thou saw'st thy mates depart,
O birdling dead ?

Or had it soothed thy pangs of hunger keen,
Or warmed thy ice-cold frame, if thou hadst been
Made conscious what such reasoning might mean
And following its thread ?

Will thy wing'd mates, in the first glow of spring
Returning, when the cuckoo 'gins to sing,
To yonder eave,
Bethink them of the nestling left forlorn,
Of love and warmth and life untimely shorn,
Because, unwitting, it was too late born ;
And for thee will they grieve ?

On thy bare frame, half-fledg'd and weather blench'd,
Thy tender plumage, ruffled and dew-drench'd,
Smoothly I lie ;
Then underneath the laurel's shade I rake
A clearing 'mid the mould'ring leaves ; so make
Thy grave, and bury thee where thou may'st take
Thy rest eternally.

And those who list may solve the curious quest,
Whether an early death like thine were best
Or long bird-life ;
Thy race's chequered lot of joy and care,
Now flitting through the warm food-laden air,
Now pining for that warmth and food are rare,
A lot with trial rife.

NATURE'S UNSELFCONSCIOUSNESS.

HATH the rose, when it blows,
Any sense of its worth ?
Does it know its rich glow
As a fair thing of earth ?

When its hue gleams to view,
Does it feel that it gives
Added brightness and light
To the spot where it lives ?

When its scent seeks sweet vent
Through the warm summer air,
Does it deem—"from me stream
Airy sweets past compare ?"

Says the sun, "'Tis well done,
Light and heat I shed round,
Making life strong and rife
Through the worlds to me bound ?"

Thinks the star, "From afar
I diffuse a mild light,
One small beam in the gleam
Of the star-teeming night ?"

Thrills the lark, when the dark
From morn's brow disappears,
With the thought : " How joy-fraught
Sounds my song in men's ears ! "

Deems the vine, when sunshine
Mellows slowly its fruit,
That its juice will induce
Strength for man's life-pursuit ?

Knows the corn, when 'tis shorn,
'Tis of use to mankind ;
Or that good is the food
Which the harvest sheaves bind ?

Thinks the shower, " My downpour
Will all green life revive,
Thanks I meed from all seed
My heaven drops make alive.

Nature brings her fair things
And her useful to man,
All untaught to take thought,
Use or beauty to scan.

So must we, from self free,
Goodly use yield to men ;
Our best fee, as said He,
" Hope for nothing again."

THE DYING SYCAMORE LEAF.

SERE are the leaves on the sycamore tree,
In death's livery clad they are mournful to see,
Their hoarse, dying rustle is vocal to me.

For the concert of leaves with insight I hear,
Whether green they laugh in the sunshine, or sere
They plaintively moan in the winter-blast drear.

So I to the sycamore tree drew nigh,
To catch, as I could, the last sad sigh
Of the sick leaves pale and ready to die.

In the thousandfold rustle of sigh and groan—
For a sigh hath each leaf and a voice of its own,
Of one leaf I marked the feeble tone.

From the mother tree-twigg it loosely hung,
By a half-severed stalk, while it helplessly swung
In the ice-wind, and this was the dirge it sung :

“ What fruit hath my life since it first began,
When I thrill'd to the sap through my veins that ran,
What use to myself, or to beast, or man ?

“ I have bask'd in the sun, and bath'd in the shower,
Have added my mite to our mother's green bower—
The use which of leaves is the commonest dower.

“ Yet while on my one-summer life I muse,
Small occasions of service I need not refuse
To count, or forget, once my use was abuse.

“ In a thunder shower, a gipsy child,
Her swarthy locks bare, and dark eyes gleaming wild,
Came beneath me for shelter ; she found it, and smiled.

“ From her head I warded rain-drops a score,
I counted them not, they might have been more,
Thus I help'd carve the smile that her red lips wore.

“ To things living one service besides I paid,
I furnished a lamb that beneath me was laid
On a hot summer day, three square inches of shade.

“ Such is my life record of service or use,
Against which must be placed an unwilling misuse
Of my powers. For a murd'rer broke loose

“ From his captors, hid in our cover green,
Our foliage that wretch and his due came between,
And his pale, cruel face, I aided to screen.

“ Is the life worth having that can but plead,
Such meagre achievement of worthy deed ?
One might almost as well be a noxious weed.

“ Must shelter and shade be so blended with ill,
That the child and the lamb with content we fill
By means which give safety to fiends who kill ?

“ Is this the sole end of the hopes I nursed,
When to the May sunshine I thrill'd at first,
And from the brown womb of my calyx burst ? ”

More it would have said, but the autumn blast,
The leaf-stalk tore from the twig at last,
And 'mong its dead comrades the leaf down cast.

Then mused I : “ This leaf of a tree well leaved—
Say one of ten thousand—quite causelessly grieved,
Not all vain was its life, as it sadly conceived.

To make a child's lips bud forth in a smile,
The footsteps of law from their course to beguile,
And a lamb to shield from the sun for a while,

Form a life-score commingled of good and ill,
A Type we discern—look wherever we will
The chequered lot, leaves, ay, and men fulfil.”

QUOTATIONS AND COMMENTS (I.).

“A PRIMROSE BY A RIVER’S BRIM.”

Quotation.

“ A PRIMROSE by a river’s brim,
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more.” *

* * * * *

Comment.

I.

Say, then, mysterious Sense
Of Beauty, why or whence
This primrose by a river’s brim
Should *more* than primrose be “ *to him.*”

2.

Thy insight all divine,
Wake to each outward sign,
Of fairest soul indued in sheath
Of beauty form, part hid beneath

* Wordsworth, “ Peter Bell,” part ii.

3.

Its lustre, quick descries
(Truth hid from earthlier eyes),
With more than common glory glows,
A picturesquely placed primrose.

4.

Her cup of dimmèd gold,
That in its depths doth hold
An orange cuplet, dainty small,
Part of her splendour is, not all.

5.

Lighting the moss-bank green,
With her pale yellow sheen,
She sits, a queen, gold-clad, alone
Upon her cushioned emerald throne

6.

As when the star of eve
Doth from the sun receive
Its dying rays, and with their light
Shines all supreme—sole queen of night.

7.

Or when the pale moonfills
A calm night, and distils
Her silvery sheen on wood and stream,
Making the earth a fairy dream.

8.

Or when on some fair brow
A brilliant doth endow
With added lustre, the impress
Of the whole visage's loveliness ;

9.

So round her each sweet thing
Doth its own glory bring
To deck her beauty, and to throw
About her splendour ampler glow.

10.

Above, the sun of May
Doth with a warmer ray
Expand her petals, and her gold
With purer brilliancy unfold.

11.

The trees above her head
Their roots give for her bed,
While each new-budded leaf springs forth,
Homage to yield to her dear worth.

12.

The river at her feet
Doth give her music sweet,
And on its limpid bosom trace—
As on a lover's heart—her face.

13.

With varied, gladsome glee,
The birds in every tree
Do celebrate her charms, and sing
The praises of this queen of spring.

14.

Sweet symbol too is she,
Of Truth and Modesty,
Of dainty grace, refinement rare,
Of all things choice and good and fair.

15.

Since, like her, do all these
The Sense of Beauty please ;
And all thrive best in far remove
From the loud stir and dust men love.

16.

Thus with a halo crowned
Of mingling beauties round,
A concentrated glory glows
From this lone river-side Primrose.

17.

How blind then must he be
Who only *this* can see—
A primrose yellow, round in rim,
Growing hard by a river's brim.

TO A NEW-BUDDED BEECH TREE.

I.

I GREET thee, fair tree,
All enraptured I see
Once more thou art draped in thy spring bravery.

2.

At thy toilet I've been
Daily watching, and seen
By degrees thy investure in green gold sheen.

3.

Each stem every day
Greener shoots did array,
Till each bud-bestrung twig seemed an emerald spray.

4.

Then in clouds of pale green,
Brown-shaded between,
Thy round masses of tender new foliage were seen.

5.

Now thy toilet is done,
Thy spring mantle put on,
And thou gleam'st in green glory before the May sun.

6.

Yet fain would I know,
So I prythee me show,
Why thus thou art draped in thy tender green glow.

7.

Then the green beech tree,
Whispered softly to me,
As the wind stirr'd its leaves in a hush'd melody—

8.

“In green am I dress'd,
So it may be confess'd,
I match with the earth in her new vernal vest.

9.

“I would raise a new fire,
Green and gold—so that nigher
I may lift my young shoots to the sun their sire.

10.

“To my leaves I give birth,
They may thus prove their worth,
Giving glory and shade to this spot of fair earth.

11.

“ Million-fold my young mast
I produce, they may cast
Them around, and grow trees when my own term is past.

12.

“ Thus Nature’s own will
I try to fulfil,
My summer work doing as I can well or ill.”

13.

Then said I to the beech,
“ Wholesome truth thou dost teach,
But what of thy winter rôle, tell, I beseech.

14.

“ Darker daily will grow
These bright leaves, till they show
By fading and falling the near frost and snow.

15.

“ Then thy branches, I ween,
Will all naked be seen,
As they were ere thou donnest this robe of pale green.”

16.

Then the tree with a sigh,
As the wind rustled by :
“ Ah, I know these fair leaves are now born but to die.

17.

“Generations before
Leaves and fruit have I bore,
Which the wild winter wind from my branches have tore.

18.

“Ah, who may essay,
The sense to convey,
The pain and privation of death and decay.

19.

“But then I well knew,
E'en when winter winds blew,
That foliage once faded must give place to new.

20.

“Of tree-life 'tis the norm,
Of its growth the due form,
That its verdure must yield to the wintry storm.”

21.

More the tree would have said,
But the wind that had sped
Its tongue-leaves was now still, and they hung as if dead.

THE THRUSH AND THE SNOW.

A TRAGEDY OF NATURE.

THRILL'D by the pricks and stings of spring,
Two thrushes were stirr'd to mate, nest, and sing

In the cold bleak March and its frosty air,
For summer's delights they began to prepare

The leaf-shielded fork of a laurel tree,
Their nest foundation they chose to be.

There, careless of March and its icy wind,
Their wreathèd home with skill they entwined.

When built they clay-wattled their nest in a form
Which well might withstand a late winter storm.

Blithe work and blithe singing went hand-in-hand,
In love's harmony joined as a holy band.

At length—the nest built—its clay concave round
Gleamed with eggs, black-speck'd on a bright blue ground.

Then with young life the mother herself addressed,
To fill her warm home and her yearning breast.

She sat on her eggs while her mate on a tree
Of sunshine, home, love, sang in choice melody.

She brooded, he sang, till one cold bleak day
Four thrushlings appeared on the nest-floor of clay.

While the cold March waned, and its east wind blew,
The callow nestlings to fledged birds grew.

Now with hopes and aspirings tremulous, sweet,
The parent birds' hearts began to beat.

Of summer they dream'd, its warmth and its food,
Its joy and its sunshine maturing their brood.

Alas! the March wind with more frost congealed,
Hurled a pitiless snowstorm on garden and field.

From the laurel-bush top hurtled down a snow crush,
Cold, wet, overwhelming the nest of the thrush.

Scarce 'scaped the mother—she flew away,
Loudly shrieking her terror and hapless dismay.

Beneath their snow-shroud, white, frozen and deep,
The new-fledged thrushlings were chill'd to death-sleep.

Food lacking, heart-hungered, the mother bird
Soon the fate of her nestlings so dear incur'd.

But a few more lone days survived her mate,
When by cold, grief, and hunger he shared a like fate.

But ere he followed the dear ones gone,
Their fate and his own he thus mused upon :

“No world is this,” sigh’d the dying bird,
“To obey Nature’s impulse within us stirr’d.

“Nature prescribes, it would oft seem in hate,
A poisoned potion—untimely fate.

“Callow nestlings and hopes—who dare it gainsay—
Of the late winter storm become often the prey ?

“’Twere a seemlier world wherein bird-life might grow
Were it freer from blighting frosts and snow.

“A seemlier world were the promptful breath
Of Nature, Love, Song not the presage of death.”

A PANTHEISTIC REVERIE.

BROOKLETS in the river,
Rivers in the ocean,
Merge and lose their separate being
With swift impulsive motion.

Dewdrops—cold's pearl issue—
Yield their chill-bound splendour,
To the sun's warm morning mist
Their parted lives surrender.

To the sun-warm'd air
Flowers resign their sweetness,
In a larger diffused being,
Finding their completeness.

Trees jut forth their shoots
With spring-stirr'd propension,
Only content when they have reached
Their nature's full extension.

Leaves of autumn fall,
Nor fear decay's pollution,
Commingling with their comrades dead
In happy dissolution.

Time's swift moments rush
To join the myriads past,
Eager into its boundless store
Their transient being to cast.

Nature's countless births,
Boundless in their ranging,
Into other forms and beings
Are ever, ever changing.

Nature forces all
To each other tending,
Impulse give to ampler force
With its action blending.

So man's single being
To its destiny urging,
May its fitting issue find
In the All-Being merging.

1

*THE ROSARIAN TO A NEW AND
BEAUTIFUL SEEDLING ROSE.*

ALL welcome ! fresh-created flower,
Rejoicing in the new-born dower
Of beauteous form and scent and hue,
As "grand" a rose as ever grew ;
Distinct from thy fair sisterhood,
Yet member of their fairy brood.

* * * * *

Yet am I puzzled sore to dwell
Upon thy birth ; nor can I tell,
With all my reason, how or why
Thou cam'st thus forth to glad my eye.
Say, wert thou in Creation's plan,
Inventoried ere it began ?
Were all thy stages then preknown—
That after æons of time had flown,
I blindly rose-seed must have sown,
And thou therefrom must needs have grown ?
Or did chance with her wayward spell
Thy being by accident impel ?

* * * * *

Born in the dark environment,
 Where Nature oft veils her intent ;
 In the complexity of forces,
 Which of live beings and powers the source is,
 Thou gleamest forth as doth a star
 From midnight darkness, deep and far,
 Small kosmos by a chaos gendered,
 And for earth's added glory tendered ;
 Sweet melody resounding, free
 From varied perplexed harmony,
 A sudden flash of beauteous hue
 From out of Nature's boundless "blue,"
 An utterance clear, trumpet-blown,
 From many a whispered undertone,
 A peaceful birth with beauty rife
 From Nature's elemental strife.

* * * * *

But born, as thou art thus, of Law,
 Which no man ever searched or saw,
 Scarce likely is it I could trace
 Thy parentage of form and face.
 Wholly unlike thy nearest kin,
 My greater wonder thou dost win ;
 Remote resemblance thou dost bear
 Unto a rose of beauty rare,
 But seed of which I've never sown,
 Nor parent stock have ever grown.

* * * * *

But dearer art thou to my heart,
 For that I claim so small a part

By direct foresight, aim, intent
 In thy production. Thou seem'st sent
 To tell how poor a thing is man,
 Nature's deep mysteries to scan ;
 Thy being's cause scarce am I more
 Than he who finds it on the shore,
 Hath caused the shell ne'er seen before.
 Or he who casts the dice, nor knows
 What end shall follow his blind throws.

* * * * *

Fair symbol thou art of the power—
 Creation's first Almighty dower,
 Which Nature's constant brooding brings
 To fairest birth the fairest things ;
 Flashing to light beings hid from view,
 And from old methods products new.
 Like Inspiration's lightening beam,
 Which on the thinker's mind doth gleam
 Spontaneously, nor whence nor why
 Can he its origin descry ;
 Clear sign in brief art thou to me
 Of Heaven's all-ruling deity
 Embodied in earth-mystery,
 Rare flotsam on the shoreless ocean
 Of Nature, God, Space, Time, Life, Motion.

THE BEECH AND THE WOODBINE.

A PARABLE.

I.

SAID a young sapling beech in a nobleman's park,
"I mean on tree-records to leave my mark.

2.

"Herewith I resolve :—'Tis my noble fate—
My true place among trees, that I should become great.

3.

"The tree from whose shelled 'mast' I awoke
To life, was as great as some storied oak ;

4.

"It spread itself forth, and a wide circuit made
In winter of boughs, and in summer of shade.

5.

"So, like my ancestral tree, must I
Become massive in bulk, and broad, and high."

* * * * *

6.

But a few summers only had clothed with green
The beech, that its silver bark scarce was seen,

7.

When a woodbine sprang from the self-same ground,
And her arms his silver trunk clasped around

8.

With a loving sigh. "Fair tree," said she,
"My guide and support thou wert meant to be ;

9.

"'Tis Nature's law that the slender and weak
In robuster companions their strength should seek."

10.

Nothing loath was the beech ; it could do him no wrong,
And the clasp of the weak proved the strength of the
strong.

11.

From east to westward—the track of the sun,
Her climbing circuit the woodbine begun,

12.

Claspingly closer, clung like a leech,
Each curling twig round the smooth grey beech ;

13.

And every year, as the woodbine grew,
Came young shootlets and flowers for ever new.

14.

And the beech rejoiced in her close caress,
And her shoots and her flowers was minded to bless.

15.

It enhanced the green wealth of his summer dower
When his branches were wreathed with the woodbine
flower ;

16.

And the nectarous perfume the flowers distilled
Its warm summer shade with sweetness filled.

17.

But, alas ! with years, as the tree grew higher,
The woodbine's embrace became fatally nigher,

18.

Like other affectionate natures she proved
How tenacious their clasp who once truly have loved.

19.

Then the silver trunk could no longer distend,
Nor in wider sweep could the branches extend.

20.

His sap found no room for its vernal ascent,
And his impulse of growth was thus speedily spent.

21.

Thus the beech became stunted, and dwarfed, and
small,
Quite unlike all his race, wide-spreading and tall.

22.

Then it plaintively sighed, "This, then, is the fate
Of my youthful dream-wish to be famous and great ;

23.

"To the woodbine's embrace I, alas, am a prey,
My ardours of youth she has clasped away.

24.

"I might have grown famous—with such birth-dowers :
Of caressings I die, and enwreathings of flowers "

THE SONG OF THE ROSES.

WHAT song is that which the Roses sing,
When summer's noon follows the morn of spring?
What music of form, hue and scent so fair,
Is that which they yield to the warm June air?

* * * * *

Give ear, O mortals, and ye shall learn—
If your hearing be subtle and skilled to discern—
The choral song which the Roses sing,
When summer's noon follows the dawn of spring.

* * * * *

“ We come to earth—pure spirits that roam
From the realm wherein Beauty hath her home.
Wherein things that are fair and of treasured worth,
Are conceived and plann'd ere produced on earth ;
Where beings that here mere abstractions seem,
With no more consistence than hath a dream,
By spirit senses are known and scann'd—
As the craftsman's work by the craftsman's hand—
In their concrete splendour—spirit real
The glory consummate of the Ideal.

* * * * *

" Where typical forms of celestial birth,
 Of whatever is choicest and best on earth,
 Retain their heaven-born glory and glow,
 The fairest souls of fair bodies below ;
 Where germs of Beauty and Goodness gain
 The amplest dimensions they *can* attain
 Where death, nor obstruction, nor cause malign
 Can arrest a growth spontaneous, divine ;
 Where Ideal Roses of ideal hue,
 Fairer than mortals ever knew
 Bloom under skies of ideal blue.

* * * * *

" There Beauty maintains an enduring reign,
 Fair life is fearless of death or pain,
 And Virtue by Evil is ever unslain ;
 There the Good and the Fair, recking nothing of change,
 To death and decay are for ever strange—
 Immortal entities ! Touch of time
 Ne'er can taint their eternity sublime.

* * * * *

" Ah ! could mere mortals but see unfurled,
 The glories of that pure ideal world,
 Could they catch were it only a passing glance
 At the realm of Beauty and fair Romance,
 Where Beauty herself—the sole well spring
 Of all that is fair in each beauteous thing—
 Reigns ever enthroned o'er the ideal race,
 The fore-types of Loveliness, Truth, and Grace ;
 A dominion conterminous with aught fair,
 In earth or sky, or the infinite air,

And during in time where time cannot extend,
To æons of ages without end.

* * * * *

“ Could they note of that world, serenely fair,
How its scenes and objects harmoniously share
Like beauteous attributes. How its air,
Bright and translucent, is fitted to show
Whatever is goodly with added glow.
How its ideal landscapes ever shine,
Bathed in light transcendent, divine ;
Each typical scene in loveliness drest
Surpassing in splendour all the rest.
Fitting environments of life
With wonder and tender beauty rife ;
Where Ideal birds on Ideal trees
Sing Ideal melodies to the breeze ;
Where spirit Flowers make glorious and gay,
All gardens and fields with celestial array.

* * * * *

“ Could mortals see heaven’s Roses blow
With a lustre earth Roses can never know ;
Faultless blooms, each petal its place
Filling with singular matchless grace—
Adding by symmetry, form, and hue,
To the swelling splendour in which it grew,
Forming with others like tinted and shaped,
The circling halos each flower that draped—
The whole a wonderment and delight,
Too ravishing fair for human sight.

* * * * *

" *Could* men but see spirit Roses free
 From checks that stunt our maturity ;
 From the winter wind's cruelly blasting breath,
 That bears on its pinions harsh threats of death ;
 From the smiting chill of the thunder shower,
 The succulence dank of the long downpour ;
 From the festering heat of a hot July,
 When the sun is ablaze in the cloudless sky ;
 From the trying changes of night and morn,
 Of joyous summer to winter forlorn ;
 From all the untoward restriction and strife,
 That stifles for Roses their amplest life ;
 From causes that mar their beauty fair,
 And its fullest development impair ?

* * * * *

"Then, what a Rose vision passing bright,
 Were heaven's ideal Rosery, infinite ;
 Wherein all conceivable forms and hues,
 Which infinite means and conditions could choose—
 The absolute, inexhaustible store,
 Of rose possibilities—plann'd before
 In Beauty's mind ere brought into light,
 With her form and comeliness bedight,
 As each day's sun is born of the star-teeming night.

* * * * *

"There in the Rose's ideal home,
 Of her types the myriad-paged tome,
 The human rosarian might haply find
 The "type" of the "sport" that delights his mind ;
 There might he discern in form, scent, and hue,

The Rose which to earth seems wholly new ;
 There the ideal origin he might trace,
 Of its shapeliness, tint, its beauty and grace ;
 There see its matured and perfect state,
 Which he cannot on earth hope to emulate ;
 The growth not of chance, but of Beauty's law
 And, like Beauty herself, without let or flaw.

* * * * *

“ Restrained, alas ! in outline and shape,
 Material beings, base matter we ape ;
 Each petal's form, each rosebloom's globe,
 Are material vestments in which we robe.
 We cannot bud, and blow, and expand,
 Like Ideal Blooms in an Ideal land,
 Bestirr'd alone by Beauty's fire,
 Like Beauty herself to grow and aspire,
 Till attainment be swallowed of endless desire.

* * * * *

“ Small marvel, thus stunted, we long and pine,
 For our native home in that realm divine ;
 That we muse on that world where Roses fair—
 Whose germ, form, and hue, we remotely share,
 Are matchèd with us beyond compare.
 That, striving with hindrances petty and mean,
 We dream of that world, and its life serene.

* * * * *

“ In the autumn drear, the wintry night,
 In the summer's blaze or the spring's chill blight,
 Ah ! then our thoughts and yearnings tend
 To the spirit-world whence Roses descend.

We love to dream of its stormless skies,
 Of days whose sunlight never dies ;
 Of changeless conditions of life and growth,
 Of surroundings to Roses never wroth,
 Of scenes ever bathed—as a tranquil sea,
 In a never-abating serenity.

We contrast surroundings wrathful and bare
 With ethereal perfection we cannot share ;
 And when we muse on rose-loveliness there,
 Sometimes we weep that we are not more fair.

* * * * *

“ We share, too, the feeling of death and decay,
 The earthward sensation of fading away—
 The relaxing of petals when overblown,
 And their carcasses fair on the lawn are strewn ;
 The worm in the bud, the foul insect-blight,
 Which destroys still further our feeble might.
 All are contrasts that make us mourn and sigh
 For the lot of Ideal Roses on high.
 Nothing they know of languor or pain,
 In eternal youth they eternally reign ;
 They fear not earth’s seasons, or time’s changing course,
 They perennially glow with perennial force ;
 Beauty’s fair offspring they ever share
 The changeless being of their mother fair.

* * * * *

“ Meanwhile, as we can we continue to grow,
 To strike our roots, to bud, and to blow ;
 For our office it is to discover to men,
 To *suggest* to their earth-born senses and ken,

The glories of that hidden sphere,
Where Ideal growths in full splendour appear ;
To bid them remember that Roses of earth,
However exalted men deem their worth,
Are not Roses of heavenly and ideal birth ;
To lift their minds, and, perchance, desire
By all forms of Beauty to climb still higher,
That for her true self they at last may aspire.

* * * * *

“Such is the duty we Roses perform,
When we smile in the sun or shrink in the storm.
This the office of all fair things on earth,
To 'mind men of Beauty's fair home and her birth.”

* * * * *

This is the song the Roses sing,
When summer's noon follows the morn of spring.

PAN IS NOT DEAD.

A REPLY TO MRS. E. B. BROWNING'S "PAN IS DEAD."

I.

POETESS, crowned with purest radiance,
I to heed thy song am fain—
Song of plaintive minor cadence,
With its mournfullest refrain.
Still I deem thy "Pan is dead"
All untrue ; I hold instead
Pan is not dead.

2.

Unless thou deemest the gods of Hellas
Died the partial death of men,
Outer signs of life that tell us
Disappearing from our ken,
Leaving yet of each life-whole
Germ and crown of life—the soul ;
Pan is not dead.

3.

True it is the names have perish'd
Of the ancient gods Hellene—
Zeus, with those dim Tart'rus cherished,
And earth-deities between.
But the soul of each god-name
Now as then remains the same.
Pan is not dead.

4.

What though Zeus no more hurl thunder
From his high Olympian throne,
"Sky" or "air" still stirs our wonder,
Hath a will, too, all its own.
Truth of Zeus-myth cannot die
While veiled forces rule the sky.
Pan is not dead.

5.

And she, Zeus's brain-born daughter,
Is her lore for ever said,
Now her legend—moving laughter,
Name and shrine and cult are dead?
Change may mark each wisdom sign,
Wisdom is deathless as divine.
Pan is not dead.

6.

Goddess too of human passion,
With its dire potency,

Art thou dead, now modern fashion
 In her own mode deems of thee ;
 Is love's power a whit less mighty,
 That men *name* not Aphrodite ?
 Pan is not dead.

7.

Though Apollo's reign be over,
 And the sun now beams on men
 As the planets' central mover,
 Gaseous globe of hydrogen,
 Yet to learn its end or source is,
 Now, as then, past man's resources.
 Pan is not dead.

8.

Though the Muses and the Graces
 Nymphs that sting to song and love,
 Hold not now their ancient places,
 Yet they hold their power to move ;
 In artist's dreams and poet's fire,
 They thrill to beauty and desire.
 Pan is not dead.

9.

Are not rivers, rills, and fountains
 Stirred by pulses strong and free ?
 Hath the wind that sweeps the mountains,
 No Oread personality ?
 Change the name, and Naiads still
 Rule each fount, laugh in each rill.
 Pan is not dead.

10.

Doth the Rose act all unwitting
When she drapes in loveliest hue ?
Is the Lily's white unfitting
To white impulse to be due.
Flower-forms, colours, perfumes claim
Individual thought and aim.
Pan is not dead.

11.

Yield not woods' soft rustling laughter
To the sunshine and the breeze ;
Hear we not their " grace " sung after
Tardy showers their thirst appease ?
Dryad forms we need not, seeing
Each tree is a sentient being.
Pan is not dead.

12.

Mark the speech and form uprearing
Of the tree that proudly thrives ;
Note its weak and languid bearing
With decay that vainly strives.
Who might not, the latter nigh,
Say, This Nymph will surely die ?
Pan is not dead.

13.

Is imagination's force less
Now than in the days of yore ;

Move our sympathies remorseless
 From the feelings which then bore
 Nature's deeper views and voices
 When she sorrows or rejoices?
 Pan is not dead.

14.

Round each object of our senses
 Mystic vapours darkly spread,
 And our knowledge of it hence is
 By our fancy largely sped :
 Of mist bodies, spectral souls,
 Partial vision of dim wholes.
 Pan is not dead.

15.

Mythic shape is but the vesture
 Which man's ignorance doth hide,
 And the denseness of its texture
 Forms the line that doth divide
 Our new science from the lore
 Of the myth-stirr'd minds of yore.
 Pan is not dead.

16.

Yet while ancient myths of Hellas
 Fail thy sense of truth t'assuage,
 Of a later thou dost tell us,
 Myth of an unworthier age :—
 The ghostly voice that wailing cried,
 "Great Pan is dead," when Jesus died,
 So falsely cried.

17.

Myth—true insight unpossessing,
Since Christ's mission unto man
Was to plant with newer blessing,
Not to waste, the realm of Pan ;
Kindling upon man's ancient shrine—
Part raised by Greece, new fire divine.
Pan is not dead.

18.

Sensuous Grace, Love, Joy, and Beauty,
By Greek god-names symbolized,
Find in sacrifice and duty—
Higher aims—Christ realized—
Needed complement of all
Earth-born joys that men enthral.
Pan is not dead.

19.

Not less blind is modern Science,
When it shrieks, "Great Pan is dead,"
Forbids on fancy's power reliance,
And experience lauds instead,
Dwarfing man's full mental stature
By contracted views of Nature.
Pan is not dead.

20.

Science truths thus grow prosaic—
Forces, measures, half-known laws,

Pieced in a confused mosaic
Of effects without due cause.
Ignorance is not removed,
Though mere symbols be disproved.
Pan is not dead.

21.

Is the Real, as men declare it,
Naked sense or sordid fact ;
Less true than the *mode* they share it
In each conscious thought and act ?
All truth must become Ideal
Ere it answer man's appeal.
Pan is not dead.

22.

Truth, like gold for human dealing
Blended with some hard alloy,
Needs must share man's thought and feeling,
Coined and stamped for his employ,
Or it cannot circulate free
Prime medium in man's currency.
Pan is not dead.

23.

Poets, then, through realms of fairy
Let your Fancy freely stray,
Dull truths render gay and airy
Paint each fact fair as ye may ;
In a world charged with dim glory
Room abounds for Fancy's story.
Pan is not dead.

24.

Though ye cannot now restore us,
We know well, the reign of Pan,
Nor the myth-world those before us
Feigned the ideal heaven of man,
Truth may yet be graced by fancies,
Life made glorious by romances.

Pan is not dead.

25.

Hath not life, too, phases unbright,
Sorely needing Fancy's aid
To illumine them, as the sunlight
Gilds the margin of the shade—
Poor were life, surcharged with dulness,
Robb'd of Fancy's frolic fulness?

Pan is not dead.

26.

Learn then, Science, larger culture,
Sympathies with old and new,
Haste not ancient thought's sepulture
For its seeming dead to you.
Truth there is for all men's quest,
Though each age its own deems best.

Pan is not dead.

27.

And, Religion, smile benignly
On the nobler classic lore;

Hellas sages taught divinely
 Part of your celestial store.
 Fined gold hates not the ore,
 The matrix rude, itself that bore.
 Pan is not dead.

28.

Nay, let all learn Pan's true lesson,
 Large embracement of all sooth,
 Nor unfairly lay all stress on
 One particular kind of truth ;
 The further men their limits scan
 Broader they make the realm of Pan.
 Pan is not dead.

29.

Thus with knowledge's new-earned treasure
 Pan's dominions daily spread,
 Now his rule hath ampler measure
 Than when fools cried, " Pan is dead ;"
 The being and compass of the all
 In thought-expanse can ne'er grow small.
 Pan is not dead.

30.

No, not dead is Pan, but living,
 Greatest of the Greek-god race ;
 The whole embracing, all life giving,
 In large souls must find a place ;
 All creation's ideal sum
 Must waken awe through æons to come.
 Pan cannot die.

31.

Pan by birth-right is immortal,
Scion of a race sublime,
Kin to beings of endless sort, all
Deathless e'en as space and time.
Who dare think oblivion's night
Can hide the all-present Infinite.
Pan cannot die.

32.

And, ye earlier myths, we ponder
Summ'd in Pan's inclusive being,
Born of beauty and dim wonder,
Death-proof surely are ye, seeing
Twin gods in man's world must be,
Beauty e'er with Mystery.
Pan cannot die.

THE SONG OF THE WATER-LILY.

UPWARD, upward to the light,
From the winter's frozen night,
From our bed of slime and ooze,
Fit for torpor's dull repose—
From the chill depths of the stream
To its surface, where the gleam
Of the spring tide sheds a sheen
Brighter than crystal ever seen.

* * * * *

For the May sun glows on high,
Beaming from the azure sky,
Piercing with effulgent ray
Through the water, mud, and clay
(Where our roots for many a day,
Hidden in their oozy bed,
On its succulence have fed),
Till its warmth their bosom fills,
And each trembling fibre thrills,
With a new and sweet emotion,
With a manifold commotion,
And the torpid, bulbous root,
Each like dried pine-apple fruit,

From its black and wrinkled skin,
To the tissue furthest in,
Glow's afresh with quickening heat
In its sombre, cold retreat.

* * * * *

Long in winter's deadly chain,
In its inert passive pain,
Scarce half-living have we lain ;
Nay, all lifeless did we seem,
When the skate's shrill steely scream
Sounded on our frozen stream.
When our glazèd face deep snow,
Curtained from our world below,
Yon unwatery world of life,
With loveliness and movement rife,
All its sky and sun and light
With its due alternate night—
Then indeed we were as dead
Buried in our oozy bed.

* * * * *

But, how cold and dark soever,
Winter doth not last for ever ;
Frosts dissolve, snows melt away,
Water's midnight turns to day.
And the motion of the stream,
And the spring sun's warmer gleam
Woke us from our winter dream.

* * * * *

Upward ever to the light,
To that heavenly radiance bright,

Would we might attain still nigher
 To its glorious central fire.
 Fain would we bathe in its glory,
 In yon heaven's highest story,
 Mounting upward on the wings
 Of our leaves to loftier things,
 As the birds with lesser pinions
 Seem to soar to its dominions.

* * * * *

But, alas! our wish is vain,
 Profitlessly we complain ;
 All our growth is tied and bounded
 By its element surrounded.
 All our snaky arms attain
 Is the river's face to gain ;
 All our leaves can do when spread
 Is their loveliness to shed
 High as the water lifts its head.
 And our flowers, radiant white,
 Though in heavenly hues bedight,
 Swim no closer to heaven's light.

* * * * *

Thus, ourselves we must content
 With pursuing the due bent
 Of the impulse in us stirr'd.
 Though we cannot, like the bird,
 Cleave the sky with bounding wing,
 We can do as fair a thing,—
 We can clothe the river's face
 With a varying tender grace,

Shading from the sun's fierce glow
All that move and live and grow
In the crystal depths below.
We can send forth, fair and large,
Leaves with rounded graceful marge,
Anchored, as a moored barge,
By green cablets, fast, yet free—
As tiny rafts tied to a tree—
Gently waving with the force
Of the river in its course ;
Each an islet, fairy-green,
Where the halcyon is seen,
Brilliant in the May sun's ray
With its emerald livery gay,
While it watches for its prey.
Or the golden wag-tail seems
Raying back the golden beams
Which the sunshine on it streams.

* * * * *

Then, a still diviner dower
Yield we in each lustrous flower,
Floating lightly on the stream,
Like a tender fairy dream ;
Each an orange-pupil'd eye,
Opened widely to the sky,
Beaming in heaven's radiant light,
As a lover's eye grows bright
When the loved one comes in sight,
While the closed lids at night
Marks the mood, aggrieved and sore,
It can see its sun no more.

* * * * *

So, our sum of lily duty
Seems to feed the Sense of Beauty
Stirr'd in every human breast ;
This pursue we then with zest
And to Nature leave the rest.

ODE TO THE SKYLARK

OH, not in regular verse
Would I thy praise rehearse,
Sky songster, that with tireless wing
Dost in the heaven's blue vault unceasing sing.

More fitted to thy lay—
Spontaneous, wild, disdainful rule or measure,
Acknowledging no break or stay
In its impetuous rush,
But pouring forth in ceaseless gush
Thy heart's sweet treasure—
Were words of like irregular strain
Refusing to be bound
By measured feet of sense or sound
Nor oft repeating—
Each lawless stanza's sense completing—
The same refrain.

Thy wild, impassioned glee
Shall music be to me,
To which my weaker words I fain would fit
The while I at thy feet here humbly sit ;
And thy celestial outpour set to
This earthy, mean, inadequate libretto.

What words could man devise,
Though ever so music-wise,
As to keep pace with thy unceasing trill ?
The while I muse on but a single word,
Thou, music-maddened bird,
With a whole symphony heaven's arch dost fill,
And music-mobile souls with kindred rapture thrill,

In human words and letters—
As though it were a dance in iron fetters—
How shall I mark each liquid strain,
So volubly and variously renewed,
As though each descant with fresh life endued
Again and yet again
Burst forth with might and main ;
Each simple theme pursuing and pursued,
As in our cruder fugues the melodic refrain.

Surely thy rapture thou canst not contain
Nor its ebullient joyousness restrain,
But as in stress of vehement joy or pain
Mortals must vent their cry
Or else they die,
So forceful thou art fain
To fill the sky,
And on earth-treading mortals nigh
To pour in ceaseless utterance melodious rain.

Thy music seems combined
Of all bird-harmonies close intertwined
As if of all the minstrels of the grove—
Moved not by greediness, but love—

Thou hadst acquired the fairest notes
 That e'er were moulded by their tuneful throats.
 The simple allegros of finch or linnet,
 The shorter measures of the nightingale,
 Something of each thy symphony hath in it,
 Though they have no avail
 To rob thee of th' individual bent of song
 Which to thy tuneful brain and heart belong.

The demi-semi-quaver's eager gush,
 Itself exhausting in its rapid rush,
 Until it ends in a prolonged "Tweet"
 More varied—yet as sweet—
 Than the like notes of mavis or of thrush.
 I mark thy rhythmic glee,
 Ti-ra-lee, Ti-ra-lee, Ti-ra-lee,
 In triplets trippingly ;
 Then trā-tă-ră, trā-tă-ră-lee,
 In rhythmical dactylic melody,
 Tit-ăr-ă-lee-lee ; Tit-ăr-ă-lee-lee,
 Swiftest dactyle expanding to spondee,
 Myriad numbers with measures blent freely.

So through perpetual changes
 Thy warble celestial ranges,
 Thou prince of aërial musicians ;
 With sudden inversions and countless transitions
 Of rhythm, tone, time in endless inflections,
 Amazing one's mind at the force of thy musical intuitions,
 Rivalled alone by the strength of thy melodic recollections.

*

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I listen in a trance
Of mutest marvel and subdued delight,
 Essaying in vain to thread
The rhythmic mazes of thy music dance
With phantasy unequal to the flight,
As though my wingless form and earth-clogg'd tread
 Could scale thine own celestial height,
Or this poor strain, of uncouth fancy bred,
Could mate th' æthereal measures of thy carol bright.

 But though thy meaning's depth I fail to reach,
 Dimly I apprehend,
As one who catches a brief fitful gleam
Of flashing meaning from a sublime theme,
 Which doth his insight's power far transcend—
 Part of the lesson which thy song doth teach.
Thus know I that thy musical song-speech
 Is a pure pæan of joy,
 Without misgiving, drawback, or alloy
Such as infects our human gladness with annoy.
Nay, subtlest concentration 'tis to me
 Of every form of passionate glee
Which thrills our world with glowing minstrelsy.

The May sun's joy with its beaming rays
Transmuted seems to thy anthem of praise,
The rejoicing of spring with each new quickened thing
In the strain is embodied I hear thee sing.
The calmer delight of the summer-sea wave
To the shore monotoning its monody suave ;
The boisterous joy of the thunder-shower,
Glad'ning the earth with its heaven-born dower ;

The joy of the wind when, through forest and grove,
It sings to the trees like a maid to her love ;
The babbling delight of the mountain rill,
When it noisily urges its course downhill ;
The joy of young children, mirth-oppressed,
In laughter expressing their blithe unrest ;—
All Nature's joy-outbursts of every kind
Set to thy passionate gamut I find,
Or transmuted, as men Nature's energies change,
To newly found forms or expressions strange.

But while the motive of thy song I know,
As though each note were steeped in some deep glow
 Of indeavouring bliss,
 Yet would I fain learn this—
 What power of sense or thought
 Thy blissful impulse could bestow,
Of its ebullient rapture could have taught ?

Perchance, though deluging heaven's arch with glee,
And mounting with untiring buoyancy,
 Thy inblest eye doth mostly see
 That feathered she
So lowly couched upon her grassy nest,
 And herein doubly blest,
List'ning with eye uplifted to thy lay,
And sharing its sweet love-enhanced sway
With half-fledged larklings cherished 'neath her breast.

 Yet wider sure thy scope,
Filling with buoyant song heaven's widest cope,

And still ascending high,
Till melted seems thy carol into sky,
As if it might subdue
Heaven's arch of blue
With its celestial harmony,
Than merely sating hearts and eyes
Inspired by earth-engendered ties.

Perchance the love that stirs thy breast
For the sweet partner of thy lowly nest
Was the quick spark that fired
Thy heavenward flight and its celestial strain inspired ;
Thereby
Thou wouldst proclaim to earth and sky
How love that sweetens home with tend'rest spell
To ampler, more embracing scope may grow and swell.

Yet have I heard,
Melodious bird,
In the foul court or reeking London street,
Thy caged kin uplifting pæans as sweet
As that which my enraptured ears now doth greet,
Where sure no sense of home—
A skylark's home—could come,
Or thought of love
For mate or nestlings could them move,
And yet they sang as gaily and as strong
As if, like thee, to heaven's lark-quire they did belong.

Nor singest thou for men,
Or other living beings within ear-ken
Of thy exultant song ;

For oft o'er grassy down or heathery moor
Whose face no sign of man or large life bore,
 I have watched the hovering wing,
And heard the dulcet strains which to thy race belong.

 To me thou seem'st to sing,
 Impelled by no external cause,
 Except it were the sting
Of love and sunshine and the glowth of spring—
But most in fealty to infelt laws :—
Pure love of beauty into music rendered,
Pure joy of life to heaven's high radiance tendered,
Pure joy of joyance uttered without pause.

 Thou wouldest vent
 To thy full heart's content,
 Thy scarcely utterable rapture
Almost disdainng in its onrush vocal capture
 By sweetest varied note
That e'er was tuned by feathered minstrel's throat.

 Such seems thy lofty view,
 Scaling sublimely the æthereal blue
 And pouring forth thy strains,
As though, in labour with sweet music pains,
Thou gavest life and voice to beauties ever new.

 And dared we infer,
 From the mellifluous stir
Of beauty bodied in sweet melody,
 The feelings that give birth
 To thy incessant strains of mirth,

What depths of rapture in the heart of thee,
 What stinging thrills of glee,
 Might then one haply see ;
 What fever'd beat of joy-pulsations choice,
 What thoughts thy brain inspiring to rejoice
 In surging strains almost beyond thy power of voice !

Dear heaven-inspired bird,
 With feelings deeply stirr'd,
 Thy myriad melody I oft have heard ;
 And yet those feelings moved in me
 Are not all tuned to thy enraptured glee.
 Is it that my feet press,
 Or that my unwing'd heart and brain caress,
 This sordid earth,
 That I cannot re-echo thy celestial mirth—
 That, following thy strain,
 I find an undertone of moodiness and pain,
 The half-disclosing sense of misery
 Which sore besets men's transient bursts of glee ?

Is it the thought that no imagined thing,
 No earth-engendered joy, how great soever,
 No bliss-creating task, no bright endeavour,
 No aim alloy from earth's crude gold to sever,
 Could e'er make mortal sing
 As thou dost on thy heaven-poised wing—
 A song whose content is pure joy,
 Such as no after-thought can cloy,
 And of which rapture is the sole impelling spring.

When human pulses move
By stress of joy or love,
With tender fear and apprehension blent
Is the sweet passionate bent,
The very feeling's fire destroying its content.

When reason's purer glow
Doth nobler joy bestow,
Its bliss, with thwarted or unsated effort blended,
Assures us that we know
By means which in their self-spent energy are ended.

So doth our human song,
Feeling or reason stirr'd,
To different strains belong
Than thine, O joy-wrought bird.
At times we doubtless sing,
But 'tis with earth- not heaven-attracted wing,
And our sublimest strains,
Serve mostly not to vent our joy, but veil our pains.

TO A SNOWDROP.

SWEET downcast flower, thou dost bring
New spring-fresh tidings of the spring ;
Ere that the frozen earth is thawed,
Or the snow melted off the lawn,
Thy tiny snow-white bells are seen,
Each trembling on its stem of green,
As if it were a crystal tear
Abstracted from the snow-wreath near.

I grant it, snowdrop, thou art fair,
Yet hast, methinks, a pensive air ;
Thy bent face tells thou art not glad,
Thy tear-shaped form proclaims thee sad.
Why dost not lift thy green-lid eye
And gaze up at the cloud-clad sky ?
Thou needst not shame to show thy face,
Fair white, embroidered with green lace.

I prythee, snowdrop, answer me
Two questions I here ask of thee.
What mean thy colours white and green
(Some meaning have all things, I ween,
That Nature moulds by hands unseen) ?

Then, why for ever hang thy head,
Contemplating thy earthy bed,
So recent left our air to try,
The sunlight and the winter sky?

Then secretly the snowdrop kind
Conveyed its answer to my mind,
As it waved gently in the wind :

“ I stand, a bashful, trembling thing,
Between the winter and the spring,
Between the white reign of the snow
And the green splendour spring doth blow.
And this is why my hues are seen.
Commingle white with dainty green,
My snowy petals' scalloped edge,
With green lace margined—this allege
Winter's fair colour, snowy white,
With spring's green lustre I unite.

“ And this is why I hang my head :—
Warm is our gentle mother's bed,
Beneath the surface of the ground,
Where I enjoyed a peace profound,
Which since my birth I have not found.

“ I meekly muse upon my birth
From the warm womb of mother earth,
Into this cold, inclement sky,
Where changes rule, and winds blow high,
And birth but tells us we must die.

My down-bent face means only this—
My birth I count a doubtful bliss,
And loving still my mother well,
And moved by its tender spell,
For ever on her face I dwell.

THE NEW SNOW AND THE OLD.

THE snowflakes were floating down heaven's aërial
height,
Each flake, a rare flow'ret of dazzling white,
Seemed a crystallized blossom of frozen light.

The new snow fell where the old snow lay,
In heaps that had drifted now many a day,
And their whiteness had turned to a grimy grey.

Radiantly white was the new snow and clean ;
Each crystal was cut to an edge so keen
That its outline by mortals could scarce be seen.

The new snow, disdainful the old snow's bed,
Befoulèd and crushed by human tread,
Would fain have elsewhere alighted instead.

But forced, the snowflakes began to complain—
“ So changed are ye, we scarce knew you again ;
Your form and dinginess smite us with pain.

“ All crushed are your crystals, and shapelessly torn ;
Your colour is changed from its hue heaven-born ;
Ye are fitted to rouse our anger and scorn.

“ To look at you now, who is there could know
Ye were once, and so late, heaven-descended snow,
From your pristine splendour ye have fallen so low ? ”

But the old snow answered, “ ’Tis contact with earth
That hath changed our hue from its glory of birth,
And in heaven’s white sight hath diminished our worth.

“ Our crystallized beauty we gladly had kept
With our lustrous whiteness ; how oft have we wept
That both from our being earth so speedily swept !

“ And ye, though unsullied ye now are and fair,
For similar changes must quickly prepare ;
All heaven births grow earthy when breathing earth-air.”

*A TREE'S DREAM OF ANOTHER
WORLD.*

IN the smooth surface of a half-sunn'd pool—
A quiet reach, wherein the broad'ning stream
Had ponded for itself with gravel stilt,
A transient rest, and basked beneath the trees,
Ere it resumed its journey through the vale—
A youthful oak that slanted from the bank,
Beheld, and with increasing wonder mused
Upon the beauteous vision spread beneath.

“ A world I see of beauty, movement, life,
In the mysterious depths the pool beneath
Is e'er unveiling to my wondering gaze—
A world (whereof its surface seems the gate),
Not unlike this whereon I live and thrive.
There, too, the sky is beautiful and blue,
Sunshine, on cloudless days, illumines its depths,
And on fair nights it boasts a moon and stars ;
Trees, too, and plants like those that cluster round
The pool's green marge—as round its entrance gate
Yon nether world produces without stint.
Green ferns droop careless there, as they do here,
And flowers own their customary hues.

There, too, the primrose gleams beneath the thorn,
Marsh marigolds disport their gold attire,
And bearded rushes bend beneath the wind.
Nay, I can trace tree-figures like myself,
An oak forth jutting from a mossy bank,
An ash, two birches in close neighbourhood—
As one might see in this world where we live.

What means yon world that so resembles this,
Yet seems so far removed? Are there two worlds,
And we—my comrade trees and I—stand we
Mysterious fixed upon their boundary line?
How gladly would I pierce the smooth bright gate,
Which access gives unto a world so fair?
Who knows what its profoundest depths may hold
Beyond the fragment small that meets the sight?
Mayhap yon tree could tell which in the stream
Not long since fell, and in the pool its head
Deep buried, leaving but its ancient trunk
In view. The secrets of that nether world
Perchance it knows; for my part, I know not.”

THE FLOWER AND THE FROST.

“TO-NIGHT, I must die,” said the tender flower,
Still blossoming fresh by a summery bower.

“For keen is the air, and an icy chill
My stem, leaves, and flowers begins to thrill.

“Winter is come, and its cold harsh breath,
To me and my kin is the herald of death.

“The stars gleam angrily in the sky,
As the sun when its rays shone fierce in July.

“The dew so refreshing in summer and spring,
Forms an icy crust on every green thing.

“Like a leprous ulcer, shiny and white,
The ground with a death-plague it seems to smite.

“Its summer fervour the sun has lost,
So cold are its rays they but kindle a frost.

“I marked it to-night, and it seemed to go down
With an angry glare and a fateful frown.

“E'er it rises to-morrow my life will have sped,
And I shall be numbered among the dead.

“Through the long dark night it will ebb away,
And all will have perished ere break of day.

“The stars that in spring looked down on my birth,
Now watch while I hopelessly sink to earth.

* * * * *

“Are there not twain spirits that rule plant life,
With each other contending in mutual strife?

“One genders the plant, moulds and paints the flower
A god-like, creative, constructive power.

“The other—death spirit—gives all its employ,
Life and life-products to smite and destroy.

“I feel its stern grip in each fibre to-night,
Ready use it makes of the frost's cold blight.

“Alas! 'tis the stronger—strive life as it may,
Death sooner or later enforces its sway.”

*THE ROSARIAN'S RETURN TO HIS
ROSEY AFTER A VISIT TO
LONDON ON THE OCCASION OF
A PUBLIC PAGEANT.*

O YE roses, doubly fair,
Trebly sweet are ye and true ;
Now your glory I compare,
With what lately tired my view.

Royal pomp and lordly grandeur,
Gold and gems of varied hues ;
Wealth's adornment, and the splendour
State and civic pageants use.

Tinselled trappings do they seem,
By your splendour nobly chaste,
Like true diamonds ye gleam,
Man's proud glitter is but paste.

His rank gauds are either meant
Loud to blazon forth his pride,
Or mayhap, with false intent,
Mind or body-ill to hide.

True are ye, my darling beauties,
Void of guile and loud display ;
Modesty the crowning fruit is
Of your varied rich array.

Well said He, in ancient story,
Seeing the lilies in the breeze,
Israel's king, in all his glory,
Was not like to one of these.

THE SPIDER'S WEB.

UPON my bookshelves' topmost stage
I found, and brushed with cleanly rage,
A spider's web of recent age.

Its rounded network was complete,
Each strand was wove and knotted neat,
As e'er was net for fly-snare meet.

Yet in the round decoy I saw
No trace of aught that Nature's law
Enjoined to sate a spider's maw.

No trace of moth or gauzy wing,
Of fly or any wingèd thing,
I found in that well-netted ring.

One object only it contained,
Shrunken—of all life's juices drained
And dead—the spider there remained.

Died of starvation it was clear,
No fly to his decoy came near,
His web wove did his shroud appear.

“Perchance, O spider,” then said I,
“Thy web was woven somewhat high
To trap the merely earth-born fly.”

Those who on flies do mean to thrive,
Must weave their webs where they most live :
Rule good for men I herewith give.

*THE SNOW AND THE RIME ; OR, THE
ARTISTIC ADORNMENT OF NATURE.*

IN the youth of the world, and in winter-tide,
By its own crystal affluence stirr'd with pride,
The Snow took occasion the Rime to deride.

“Truce to thy toy-work and bead-stringing, Rime,
So puny thy efforts, thou but lovest thy time
To adorn Mother Nature and make her sublime.

“Minute are thy crystals and lace fringes trim,
Her features and outlines thou dost but limn
With silvery pencillings meagre and slim.

“Why not do as I, and envelop her quite
With a dense crystal vesture, glistening white,
Each changed feature rend'ring a new delight ?

“Thou Nature's own nudity dost but enhance,
With lines marked as if by the point of a lance,
Whereas my mantle lends her fresh form and romance.”

Softly answered the Rime, “'Tis true, sister Snow,
Thy intent and thy prowess I equally know,
A new form on Nature thou wouldest bestow.

“ But in Nature adornment I deem this unwise—
Her beauties to bury beneath a disguise,
Were to veil her sweet truth with a vesture of lies ;

“ Like a statue or picture, fair as may be,
Enrob'd and enmask'd by uncouth drapery,
Till its outline or colour we no longer see.

“ Thou forgettest that Nature's real outline is fair,
And her lineaments loveliest, passing compare,
And to add to their beauty might well cause despair.

“ I, knowing that truth, am content to impinge
On her outlines my bead-work, and crystals I hinge
On the same lines in pendants of silver fringe.

“ With minutest pearls I aim but to trace
Each lineament fair of her beauteous face,
And add to her outline a light touch of grace.

“ Not burying, as thou dost, each picturesque tree,
In silver I sketch its minute tracery,
And relimn its fair contour with bright filigree.

“ I embroider with diamonds the feathery pine,
The fir's needles green, be they never so fine,
I lightly begem with pearls strung in a line.

“ Each bladelet of grass with pearl-dust I adorn,
Glistening pendants I hang e'en on thistle and thorn,
And glory impart to what else might move scorn.

“Thus Nature’s fair outlines I hold intact—
Nor would I, to array, disguise her least fact,
Least of all a new Nature propose to enact.”

* * * * *

Ye writers who follow wild fantasy’s bent,
Of this fable ye haply divine the intent,
For your teaching its rede is especially meant.

In vain Nature’s workings and facts do ye strive
Under grotesque romances to bury alive,
So that of her true outlines but few survive.

Not arrayed is Nature, but smothered quite—
Like a tree in a snow-drift hid out of sight
By the lawless fancies in which ye delight.

Ample scope hath romance in fair Nature’s domain,
And her genuine lovers do well to disdain
To ascribe to her workings untrue and insane.

Not painters of Nature, but murd’ers, forsooth,
Are those who obscure by subverting her truth,
And trample it down without scruple or ruth.

Then learn ye the lesson, well meet for this time,
Nature beauties to treat not as Snow but as Rime ;
Nature-decking is art, Nature-crushing is crime.

QUOTATIONS AND COMMENTS (II.).

THE NIGHTINGALE AND THE FROG.

Quotation.

“MAIS quand un pauvre esprit travaille beaucoup pour ne rien faire qui vaille, et qu’il ne peut ainsi obtenir des louanges publiques, afin que son travail ne demeure pas sans récompense, Dieu lui en donne une satisfaction personnelle qu’on ne peut lui envier sans une injustice plus que barbare. C’est ainsi que Dieu, qui est juste, donne aux grenouilles de la satisfaction de leur chant.”—PASCAL, “*Lett. Prov.*,” *Lett. ix.* *Quotation from P. Garasse.*

Comment.

On a moonlit night in the noon of May,
When the night begins to steal from the day
Greater share of the spring sun’s genial sway,

A nightingale sang—’twas his earliest song—
In a new leaved coppice, its foliage among,
On a bough that a rush-margined pond overhung,

With joy inspired by the radiant scene ;
For the water, the trees, and the meadows green
Were up-lit by a lovely, fantastic sheen.

Inspired no less by his brown bird-mate,
Sitting near in placid maternal state
On eggs that to song she would transmutate.

He sang with full outpour of throat and heart,
His multiple strains being conceived with art,
While he to their rend'ring skill did impart.

Pursuing each descant in nightingale range,
He was sportive and plaintive in speediest change,
No mood to his song seem'd unfitting or strange.

He sang until weary, then ceased, when there broke
On the moonlit stillness a dissonant croak :
'Twas a frog in the pond underneath that spoke.

The bird, with the spirit of music imbued,
The reptile's croak deemed maliciously rude.
" My song," thought he, " hath harsh interlude."

Again he burst forth as if fain he had drowned
In the surges of music he wafted around
The Batrachian croaker's unmusical sound.

But whenever he ceased, at once awoke
The echoes around—the lugubrious croak.
Said the nightingale, " This is beyond a joke."

How they held converse, few could tell ;
But I wield in such matters a potent spell,
And that this was their dialogue I know well :

“Prythee, frog! cease thy detestable croak,”
Said the bird; “in foul mud thy throat thou dost soak,
So that strains the most dismal it needs must evoke.

“Silence better befits thee. So, listen to me,
As I warble my night-carol varied and free,
That my music is best thou must surely agree.”

Croaked the frog in reply, “Thy song I have heard,
But the only reflection in me it hath stirr’d
Is, ‘Much better I sing than yon noisy bird.’

“Its obstreperous music aches my head;
To prevent its annoy I warble instead
My own sweeter lay from my rushy bed.

That thy music is higher esteemed than mine,
Though I marvel thereat, I do not repine;
That my power is unique—I deem it a sign.”

* * * * *

L'ENVOY.

Everywhere famed is the nightingale's note;
And if frogs to ill music mistune their throat,
Their concern may be less if on that they dote.

The nightingale's song is attuned to its ear;
One sense rules the other—their organs are near;
That the same law applies to frog-music is clear.

THE STARS.

O YE stars, in your radiance appearing,
And our night-shrouded world overseeing :

Ye puzzle us sore by your number,
And our marvel admits of no slumber.

We muse with vague awe on your sources,
Nor less puzzling to us are your courses.

Were ye meant by your far-twinkling faces,
To teach how unbounded heaven-space is,

Or to hint to all Reason's rude questing
Time's æons roll ever unresting.

Were ye fashioned by meteorites clashing,
New orbs with smit radiance flashing ?

Single sun and world systems now gleaming
Where once meteor rivers were streaming ?

Or from nebulae perhaps coalescing,
And orbed by contraction's dense stressing ?

How deeply we ponder your story,
As ye nightly gleam forth in your glory !

Do ye shine to give scope for our wonder
At your infinite beauty and grandeur ?

Are ye given that men in your quiet
May find peace from contrasted earth-riot ?

In your clustering orbs ever biding,
Are there beings like ourselves perhaps residing ?

Gleam ye to prompt man's desire,
To bid his soul starward aspire ?

Are your radiance and tenderness given
That our earth may reflect your heaven ?

Have ye nothing to sate man's deep yearning
Beyond his earth vision discerning ?

No trace of a knowledge transcending,
Where crude methods of science have ending ?

—The telescope, spectroscope limit
Whereby aiding heaven's light we oft dim it.

No whisper of whence, why, or whither,
To man's quest or his gaze coming hither ?

No response in your course or your lustre,
Which might for true knowledge pass muster ?

* * * * *

We ask, and for answer we listen
In vain ; ye but silently glisten.

PHYSICAL v. MENTAL LIFE.

REGNANT orbs of day and night,
Sun and moon bright ;
Dark is your luciferous might,
Night- or noon-light ;
Giving scope to visual sense
By your brightness,
Ye still make the mind more dense
With your lightness.
Thus your radiance seems a screen
Falsely glowing,
Apt to waive attention keen
From your knowing.
Much of your light would men give
For your learning,
Whence and why ye light-orbs live
Well discerning.
Mere eye-light doth not suffice
For mind questing ;
Reason claims her efforts' price,
On truth resting.

* * * * *

TO MY CAT "MUFF."

THOU art not dumb, my Muff ;
In those sweet pleading eyes and earnest look
Language there is enough
To fill with living type a goodly book.

Wherein who read might see
What tones unheard, and forms of silent speech
Are given that such as thee
The eloquence of dumbness men might teach.

No need of vocal noise
To tell thy varied range of wish or thought ;
Thy every glance a voice
Whose sweet inflections trustful love hath taught.

More legible to me
Than human accents, words with vague intent.
Thy tacit speech is free
From the reproach, " To hide thought speech was
meant."

Doubtful man's symbols are,
Maskèd his face, his words with glozing tainted ;
But naught there is to mar
The truth serene on thy sweet features painted.

List the ear-splitting din
Men use to vent their wants and woes to men
Until our world is kin,
In uncouth clamour, to a wild beast's den.

How peaceful were our lot
Were human moods and wishes soft conveyed
In speechful silence, not
By dissonant sounds and wordy hubbub's aid !

If silence, Muff, be gold,
Gold doubly gilt were silence such as thine ;
Since naught it leaves untold
Of aught could pass from thy fond heart to mine.

As thrills the electric strand,
So the chord, tense with sympathetic feeling,
That knits in one same band
All sentient life, new force is aye revealing.

Or as some work of art,
By brush or graver bodying true emotion,
Large meaning may impart,
And silently unfold its plastic notion.

Philosophers debate
If without speech thought may exist or no ;
How needless all their prate
The mute thought on thy brow doth clearly show.

Men call thee "dumb" and "brute ;"
Yet if best speech be marked by truth and grace,
No worthier tongue, though mute,
Was ever spoken than now speaks thy face.

EPITAPH ON "MUFF."

(Hopelessly diseased by cancer, was shot May 24, 1887.)

FAREWELL, dear Muff ; thy painful life is o'er,
And death, unconscious yet most kind, hath tore
Thee from thy human friends whose hearts are sore.

No more thy sweet expression shall I see,
Or marvel at thy deep placidity ;
A tender dream art thou henceforth to me.

We durst not see the leprous ulcers spread,
Nor mark the anguish their fell gnawing bred,
So in the briefest moment thou art dead.

Yet on thy hopeless fate I fain would muse,
For saddest things that must my spirit bruise,
To meditate is e'er my spirit's use.

Haply related to thy fatal taint,
That yearning look—that might beseem a saint
Before his shrine—was the beseeching plaint,

Thy gentle wonderment at life and pain,
Each adding to the other's puzzling chain—
Twin knot, whose solving men attempt in vain.

I cannot choose but vaguely speculate,
Stirr'd by dim hopes, upon thy after-fate,
In most things human man's all-worthiest mate.

What constitutes a soul, or gives a claim
To deathless life? Is't meekness, love's pure flame,
Or that supremest power we Reason name?

All these thou hadst—in ample measure too ;
Though mute thy Reason, it was Reason true,
While in meek love most men thou wouldst outdo.

Alas ! we leave thy fate where we leave ours,
In the dim vagueness of our stunted powers—
A theme for Fancy in her plaintive hours.

Thus much is certain ; can mortals e'er claim more ?
Thy life life's worthiest fruits in plenty bore.
Thy death in pleasure lessens our life's store ;
So we bemoan thee with sad hearts and sore.

A NOVEMBER BIRD CHORUS.

THE autumn breezes like chartered thieves
Free licence wield,
Compelling the aspens their bright gold leaves
To the earth to yield,
Where the robber winds group them as the sheaves
Of the harvest-field.

The aspen branches, spread broad and high,
Are sparsely clad,
Few left of their gold leaves against the sky,
Which made one glad ;
These twirl with a hollow rustling sigh,
As though they were sad.

Through a rift in the clouds—a rift of white,
The sun's rays stream,
Making the scattered leaves so bright
Gold pieces seem,
Reflashing the quivering noon-sun's light
With varied gleam.

But what chorus is that, but now begun,
With beauty untold,

A tremulous twittering unison
 'Mid the leaves of gold?
Sweet weaving of notes of bird-joy spun
 In myriad fold.

Not gilded leaves only the branches bear ;
 The gazer sees,
Blended with gold leaves scattered spare,
 The aspen trees
Hath hundreds of linnets filling the air
 With sweet bird-glees.

Their chorus sounds a full-bodied strain,
 As though each bird
To the others its own sweet song were fain
 To make duly heard
Harmoniously, by no envious pain
 Of rivalry stirr'd.

“What prompts your rapture, ye minstrels sweet?”
 The birds I asked.
“Ye cannot stern winter be minded to greet
 With songs joy-task'd,
And the sun is losing the summer heat
 In the which ye bask'd.

“Soon will the winter, with loathed train
 Of snow and frost,
The deadly hail and the icy rain,
 Your lives may cost ;
At least the food ye need to sustain
 You will then be lost.”

Then methought made answer the linnet choir
 To my mute request,
“ We sing in chorus for reasons higher
 Than those you suggest.
Delight of reunion, our notes inspire,
 And thrill each breast.

“ Through the summer we wandered each couple apart
 O'er woodland and moor,
Obeying the prompting that stir'd each heart
 To its inmost core—
Our nestlings' care, and the sweet love-smart
 To each other we bore.

“ Now summer is ended, and summer care
 Is passed away,
We—parents and nestlings—together share
 In this holiday ;
And we gather in troops and warble this fair,
 Mixed roundelay.

“ Oh, great is our joy when we jointly sing,
 A linnet crowd,
When raptures move us, both throat and wing,
 To a chorus loud,
And our best bird-notes we carelessly fling,
 As each is endowed.

“ ‘ How blithe we are, and how full of love ! ’
 Is our rendered song ;

Greater passion to cooing turtle-dove
Doth not belong,
Nor the joy of aught living below or above
Than ours more strong.

“ For winter, though nigh, of that have we
No present care ;
Our hearts are filled with rapturous glee
On this day so fair,
And when snow and frost we really see,
We will then prepare.”

So warbled the birds in the aspen boughs,
While the gold leaves fell,
And feelings like theirs their notes did arouse
As by common spell,
And I said, “ Your teaching my heart allows ;
Ye teach wisely and well.”

* * * * *

L'ENVOY.

Give vent to each current feeling of joy ;
Each jubilant thrill
Of love and friendship seek not to destroy
By boding ill.
Our winter may come, but as yet its annoy
Need not us fill ;
With forecast uncertain 'twere foolish employ
The present to kill.

THE AGED BLIND BIRD.

In a Somersetshire newspaper lately (October, 1888), mention was made of a person who owned "a goldfinch and canary mule bird more than twenty years old. Its sight was quite gone, but it sang splendidly every day."

 " TWENTY years old, and blind,"
 What impulse canst thou find,
 Sweet singer of a hybrid race,
Prompting thy strains of gaiety and grace?
 Long has thy world been dark,
Thy outer vivid world of glad'ning sight.
 And yet, immersed in dreary night,
Thou warblest like the music-maddened lark,
Who, when the summer morn is scarce begun,
 Up soars to meet the sun.
 Yet with what narrower range
 Of visual sense and light,
 What rare incitements of swift change,
Long-blunted stings of varied stimuli
Than those which urge the lark to mount on high !

 No sight of sun or sky
 Thy bosom thrills,
 Or view of trees and flowers
 With rapture fills.

The same dark gloom envelops all thy hours
In one unchanging blank monotony
Hardly suggestive, one might think, of buoyant glee.

Yet what know we ?
Thy inner world we cannot see ;
The spirit-plectrum, subtle, sweet,
Which stirs with throbbings thy enchanted lyre,
Yielding the ravishment our senses greet,
May be some unknown spark of heavenly fire.

Haply thy orbits dark,
With added power far more intense
Than that enshrined in outward sense,
Their light derive from that æthereal spark,
And, though still blind to our outer world,
May have a richer universe unfurled—
An inner world, ideally bright :

And so the hidden light
That “ never yet was seen on land or sea,”
In all its potent might,
May prompt and guide thy glorious minstrelsy.

Haply bright suns and trees and flowers,
In splendour rivalling those sights
Which 'trance our eyes with ever-new delights,
Fill with diviner ecstasy thy sightless hours.

Bird-dreams of a world outside our ken,
Where feathered minstrels, uncaged by men,
Full liberty using of sight and wing,
In the freedom and rapture of nature sing ;
Where skies smile serenely in vernal blue,
And bird-yearnings are sated while yet they are new
Where companionships sweet each livelong day
Make the hours pass briskly and blithely away ;

Where no winter comes with its numbing chill,
 As if bird-life and music together to kill ;
 Where bird-powers enlarge their earth-senses' store
 And sightless orbits are known no more ;
 Where all blessings of earth fill a nobler track,
 While nothing remains of its let and lack.

Or is it memory's long-hoarded wealth,
 When vital all thy senses were with health,
 The storage of thy visual delight
 Ere yet thy day became perpetual night,
 That prompts the song
 Thou sing'st unceasingly the whole day long ?
 Or other senses than the sight
 Which erewhile basked in heaven's all-radiant light,
 Mayhap they guide thee to thy joy
 With power enhanced, since vision lacks employ.
 So that the breath of spring,
 Hearing thy feathered mates more blithely sing,
 And thrills of sunshine vibrating each wing,
 Remind thee of the seasons' *seen* delight
 Ere all was veiled in a perpetual night.
 The new-draped glory of the trees and flowers,
 The sweets alternative of sun and showers,
 The sequent brilliancy of summer hours—
 These teach thy vernal outbursts loftier flight.
 Thus, although sightless, thou may'st drink
 Sweet spring and summer joy at every chink
 Or pore of sensibility,
 With scope enlarged
 And feelings weightier charged
 By narrowing thy outer sense-utility.

Or sing'st thou mostly for that, being blind,
 Of other pleasures reft by fate unkind,
 Yet use of faculties still left behind
 Thou dost not pettishly disdain ;
 So that for loss of sight some compensation
 Thou find'st in song—the endless modulation
 Of each accustomed strain,
 Transforming to voice-pleasure thy blind pain,
 As if crude ore of narrowed pining want
 By the sweet magic in thy nature rooted
 Were there transmuted
 To the pure gold of a triumphal chant ?

'Tis certain thou hast no incentives such as sting
 Most other birds to sing ;
 No urgements in thy lot so dark
 As those which stir the carol of the lark ;
 No love-intoxication sweet
 As that compelling other birds to greet
 Their wishèd mates and bring them to their feet.

No ! thou, blind bird,
 Art inly stirr'd
 By music-impulses we cannot learn ;
 But, though thy motives we may not discern,
 We well know this :—
 Privation dire
 Lacks power oft to quench joy's subtle fire,
 Or stay its vented floods of radiant bliss.

*TO A ROSE TORN FROM ITS PARENT
TREE BY A JULY HAIL-SHOWER.*

ON the green sward prone,
Face downward and lone,
 Lay a Rose—
Sad prey, fair and frail,
Of the thunder-brew'd hail,
Which the tree did assail
 With fell blows.

By the fierce volley press'd,
The green lawn it caress'd
 As it lay,
Glad to hide its torn face,
With its perfume and grace,
In the turf's close embrace
 From the fray.

Like a corpse just died,
In youth, beauty, and pride,
 Still looks fair,
Ere corruption's malign
Touch hath ventured a sign
Of the dark fate condign
 It must share,

The bright crimson bloom
Still shed light on the gloom
 Spread around,
From the dark livid sky
To the dank turf nigh,
Where the hail-stones did lie
 Self-drown'd.

Promiseful was the flower
Ere the summer hail-shower
 Wrought its doom.
Long might it the glow
Of its rose-light bestow
On plants near, made to grow
 Without bloom.

Long its fragrance might cling
To each zephyr's light wing
 As it flew.
Making faint with perfume
The charmed circle its bloom
With the light did illumine
 Of its hue.

Now a sight forlorn
Seemed the bloom thus torn
 From its tree ;
Its mute sad appeal
(For I know flowers feel)
For pure pity did steal
 Tears from me.

But what outlook keen
Could for fate so unseen
 Bid prepare ?
Who would dream in July
Winter hail, rushing by,
Would snatch and leave die
 Flower so fair ?

“ Poor Rose ! ” then I said,
“ Though quick shorn the gold thread
 Of thy life,
Know the same grim Fate,
On thy living man-mate
Strokes like thine doth not bate
 Of her knife.

“ Men and Roses, dear Rose,
Whate'er lives or blows
 Partake all
Of the lot that clings—
Life- or death-chance brings
To all earth-born things
 ' Great or small. ”

ODE TO DARKNESS.

MYSTERIOUS black aërial bound,
Half palpably encircling round
That atom of vitality,
My being's whole sphere—self-conscious me.

Thy formless form how shall I dare
Describe, or limn the vacant air ?
Mere yielding blackness—that is all
Experience taught—I may thee call.

In thy dark embrace, I could close,
My useless eyelids and suppose
I waked alone in some black cave,
A murky world, or narrow grave.

And yet hast thou thy qualities,
Which are not unrealities.
Thou hast existence—that is clear,
Though what it *is* doth scarce appear.

Objective blindness thou dost seem
To us, who all truth needs must deem
From the small standpoint of our sense,
E'en though its object be immense.

Thou hast, I take it, colour too ;
We note thy presence by its view,
Though truth our eyes perhaps may not tell,
When blind men see thee just as well.

Than light thou closer seem'st to cling,
And subtle mists dost round us fling ;
Hence our felt space scarce more extends
Than where man's frame begins and ends.

Sameness too, seems a trait of thee—
Thou art alike where'er we be ;
Not as the light's e'er changing hue,
Which restless flashes all things new.

Fit type thou art of nothingness,
Or more, of minds that dimly guess
That nothing must that being be
Which their own eyes as nothing see.

Type also art thou of man's being,
Surrounded by a vague non-seeing,
Since that his petty circle round
Extends a darkness without bound.

Due symbol also of man's knowing,
Which, though alive, p'raps somewhat growing,
Is but an islet in the immense
Dark ocean of his nescience.

Nay, ties thou claimest closer still,
A parent's rôle thou'rt held to fill
For man, the universe and all
The vastness we Existence call.

Daughter of Chaos, men of old
Thy ancient race profoundly told—
Fitting ancestry this, it seems,
Of Kosmos that with darkness teems.

Yet, though thy curtain circles round
Our being with pitchy depths profound,
We feel there needs but little light
To put thy dismal reign to flight.

A little circuit—that is all—
Eastward of our revolving ball
Extinguishes night's ebon hue,
Rekindling varied light anew.

So may some further progress slight
To day transmute our sombre night,
When all earth-gloom may melt away
In the clear beam of endless day.

NOVEMBER WINDS.

YE mournful blasts assailing
The bare and branchy trees,
Your tones seem doleful wailing
Matched with the summer breeze.
No note have ye of gladness ;
Your strains are steeped in sadness,
Or rise to shrieking madness,
As waves on storm-tossed seas.

The summer's leafy rustle
Had life-breath in its tone.
With death as though a tussle
Ye wage, so deep ye groan ;
Ye pant with mournful sighing,
Or utter long-drawn crying,
As if Nature's self were dying,
Neglected and alone.

What is it that ye utter
When loud your murmurs rise ?
What thoughts are those ye mutter
In more subdued cries ?

We know all Nature's voices
Not mere unmeaning noise is,
But signs that she rejoices,
Or, sorrow-burdened, sighs.

So haply ye are wailing
For summer joys long past,
With sorrow unavailing
Your fate should thus be cast,
Not as the winds before ye,
Who basked in summer's glory,
And drank of her rich store—ye
Are but a wintry blast.

The breeze that breathed the fragrance
Of the fresh-blown May,
And flitted in the radiance
Of springtide's genial ray ;
That heard the songs uproarious
Of nestling birds in chorus,
And stole the perfume glorious
Of the new-mown hay.

The winds that kissed the flowers
Beneath June's leafy shade,
Or cooled with July showers
Bare field or wooded glade ;
That drank the fragrant breathing,
Around the roses wreathing—
Choice cups wherein sun-seething
Her perfumes summer made.

The August winds that played
 Among the rustling corn,
Or 'mid bright pendants strayed
 That fruit-trees did adorn ;
That echoed to the laughter,
In louder tones or softer,
That ever followed after
 The harvest homeward borne.

Ye blow 'neath skies draped sadly
 In winter's dismal shroud,
O'er fields half-hid ungladly
 In cold ice-mist and cloud ;
No summer fragrance knowing,
Nor summer sunshine glowing,
Nor bird-song joy bestowing
 In measures sweet and loud.

'Tis meet your voice be wailing,
 O sad November wind,
When your troubled being is ailing
 With memories unkind.
Your spirit-brethren mourning,
Their joys to mind returning,
Make your lot worthier spurning
 That you are left behind.

Your clamour is his moaning
 Who wails a perished race—

Who ghost-like wanders groaning
 Around their burying-place ;
Who knows that summer pleasure
Was granted them in measure,
And now, all spent her treasure,
 No power may it replace.

A CLOUD INVOCATION.

(AUGUST, 1887.)

COME, prythee, cloud !
Once more our heavens o'erhang with thy dark shroud.
Sunstricken, we are languid, limp, and cow'd,
To earth quite bowed.

Day after day,
The sun hath flashed on us with steel-white ray,
And men, birds, flowers, for thy sombre grey
Devoutly pray.

Of cloudless shine
Like that which scorches dwellers 'neath the line,
Wearied we are, and for thy rainful sign
We panting pine.

Fierce torrid heat,
For England's clime and people all unmeet,
Too long upon our drooping heads doth beat—
Thy shade were sweet.

Spring's vesture new
On woods and fields hath lost its lustre due,
Merged in the dazzling and unvarying hue
Of heaven's bright blue.

The shrunken brook
That creeps, faint whispering by yon woodland nook,
Doth toward thee, as child by nurse forsook,
Wistfully look.

Sadly and lean,
Browsing the arid pasture—no more green—
The kine gaze heavenward plaintively ; they mean
T'implore thy screen.

We are not made
For ceaseless brightness unrelieved by shade.
We parch and shrink, as flowers reft of thy aid
Droop down and fade.

So, prythee, cloud !
With moisture and with coolness sweet endowed
Encompass us ; so lifting heads now bowed,
We'll laud thee loud.

*THE ASPEN LEAVES TO THE
SNOWSTORM.*

(North Devon, October 19, 1887.)

Too soon ! dread herald of winter, too soon !
Like night stealing strange on the rathe afternoon.
Though untimely, we know thee, presager of ill ;
Thy dank, clammy clutch, with its dead'ning thrill,
Thy shroud of death-pallor and numbing chill.
Not dead are we yet, but in green old age
Are equal to bearing the autumn wind's rage ;
But this foretaste of winter and ice is too much,
We shiver and shrink from thy death-gripping touch.
Why needlessly hasten the fateful day
When in Nature's due course we must fall and decay ?

* * * * *

A few weeks longer, when withered we lie
In death's motley hues on the turf hard by ;
When the sky with its wintriest clouds is o'ercast,
And the leaf-bereaved branches are bent by the blast ;
When through our late home, 'mid the twigs overhead,
The hollow wind moans like a dirge for the dead ;—
Then pityingly veil us, float down from the cloud,
And our pale corpses wrap in thy cold white shroud ;

Then death's last sad office discharge with due grace,
Its funereal traces with beauty efface,
And hide our decay 'neath thy soft embrace
From the Nature that knew us when, sprightly and green,
We merrily flashed back the summer's sun's sheen.

* * * * *

But not yet do we wish for thy sextoning care—
We need for its office due time to prepare ;
So this premature burial we prythee forego,
And for winter reserve winter's work, O snow !

TO` THE WEST WIND.

WIND of the west, wild wind of the west,
In fragments of mist and ragged clouds drest,
And blustering loud as a thing possest,
What art thou?

A demoniac spirit that goads the waves,
Till each with thy boisterous madness raves,
And fills with its shrieking the rocky caves.

A merciless force that with lawless antic
Sweeps ships and lives from the troubled Atlantic,
And Nature and men drive equally frantic.

The deadliest foe to the drowning crew,
With purpose malign thou their lives dost pursue,
Till o'er their graves shrieks the wild sea-mew.

A spirit of power ineffably grand
To those who watch, from the rocky strand,
Maddened waves of the sea, or mad trees on the land.

Dread spirit of woe to the widow forlorn,
From whose life the joy and the strength thou hast torn
With burdens o'erloading it, not to be borne.

An angel of death to the trees on the shore,
Which turn from thy breath as a thing they abhor
Their brine-burnt boughs and stunted trunks hoar.

A spirit of life to the sunburnt fields,
When thou heapest the clouds and their moisture yields
Ripened corn to the sickle the reaper wields.

An angel of health to the pallid race,
When foul cities they leave, in the fields to efface
Their pallor and toil in thy strong embrace.

Thus, wind of the west, wild wind of the west,
Thou art sometimes a blessing, but ofttimes a pest ;
Upstirring life's storms, or ensuring its rest,
Too good to be cursed, too bad to be blest.

NATURE'S MUFFLED VOICES.

SPRING TRAVAIL, 1888.

HE who on Nature hath his mind intent
Her voices hears—not only in free vent,
But when in her deep bosom they are pent.

He hears within the ardent panting strain
Of forces, freedom striving to attain,
Held still in durance—suff'ring prisoned pain.

As flooding waters chafing with their bounds,
As caged beasts pursue their restless rounds,
Or, straining at their leash, wild, eager hounds.

So in this tardy spring, I hear the voices
Of Nature forces—muffled murm'ring noises,
Of powers whose force restrained against their choice is.

* * * * *

“ I cannot breathe,” sighs the Wind of the South,
“ This Nor'-Easter kills the warm breath of my mouth ;
I suffer like flowers in summer drouth.”

“Blue as ever are we,” say the vernal skies,
“And as ready to bless earth’s uplifted eyes,
If cold mists would but cease from herself to arise.”

“My heart glows the same,” saith the April sun,
“As in ages past since the world begun ;
But by frosts and cold blasts my rays are undone.”

“Dumb is the song in each frozen throat,”
Sigh the birds ; “nor as yet can we twitter a note,
Though our music is ready—we have it by rote.”

“We pine to come back to our nest-crowded eave,”
Say the swallows ; “this tardiness makes us grieve,
But we dare not return till spring weather gives leave.”

“Prepared is my chant, ‘Cuckoo ! cuckoo !’ ”
Saith the herald of spring ; “but I cannot coo, coo
While this bitter Nor’-Easter chills me through.”

Say the flowers, “Arranged is our vernal glow,
Its beauty and fragrance on earth to bestow ;
But thwarted and vain are our efforts to blow.

“Our germs of form, of perfume, and bloom,
Though long since conceived in her fruitful womb,
Nature still retains in its ‘prisoned gloom.’ ”

“We will to rise. ’Tis our being’s decree,”
Say the multiform sap of plant, shrub, and tree ;
“But from cold obstruction we first must be free.”

What thousandfold streamlets of juices rare,
Vital spirits, each feeding its lamp's bright glare,
Now long with green light to illumine the spring air !

But, froze in their ducts, their vital flow
Is arrested, and quenched is the lustrous glow—
The green glory which spring on the earth doth bestow.

Say the myriad buds, " 'Tis time we were burst,
To open and burgeon we ardently thirst ;
Of all senses young life that feels thwarted is worst."

And each chrysalis, egg, or life-latent thing,
Awaiting new powers of life and of wing,
In its prison bewails the obstruction of spring.

" We long to run free," sings each mountain rill,
" So with music and verdure the valley to fill ;
But, chained by the frost, voice and motion are still."

So the countless powers of the teeming earth—
Spring's vernal offspring—are come to the birth,
But of strength to bring forth there is dreariest dearth.

QUOTATIONS AND COMMENTS (III.).

FLOWER THOUGHTS.

Quotation.

“To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.” *

Comment.

Below the tear-marked line
In men who muse and pine
For knowledge hid beneath eye-sense,
Thought hath her depths profound, immense.

In those fair ideal deeps
Sweet Fancy never sleeps,
But restless wanders, keen to trace
Truths hid beneath each flow’ret’s face.

As if a human soul,
Part of the sentient whole,
The mask of flowers would penetrate,
And scan its kindred’s unveiled state.

“The meanest flower that blows”
Hath life, nay, joys or woes,
Revealing to the soul-stirred eye
Profoundest depths of sympathy.

* Wordsworth, “Ode on Immortality.”

Not only life it shares
With men, and common cares,
But by due powers and limits known
Its life is personal as man's own.

The meanest flower that blows
Its history doubtless knows—
Its life from birth to present growth,
Each frost of winter—summer growth.

It knows when, forceful, free,
Outflows its energy,
Or when its course is cramped or cross'd,
Or by some fatal influence lost.

At once the languid bloom
Or leaves proclaim the gloom
Of sickness and the loathed decay
Of life that fades too soon away.

What silent wailings burst
From flowers that droop with thirst !
What misery in each pendant leaf,
And in each dying bloom what grief !

Surely they feel some pain,
Although we cannot gain,
By our crude sense, the keen insight
Fitted to probe flower-thoughts aright.

The rose torn off and crushed,
Although its voice be hushed,
Its mild resentment yet proclaims,
And man's harsh treatment mutely blames.

Upon the summer road
Thrown careless, haply trode
By passing footsteps, thus it wails
The harshness that its lot assails :

“ For this did I my gold
Or crimson bright unfold,
Amid the summer dust to lie,
A spurnèd outcast piteously.

“ For this did I distil
The perfume that might fill
With sweetness rare my circuit round,
And fragrant make the scentless ground.”

And do not flowers confess
Their sense of loneliness,
And seem to wail—in human mood,
Though mute appeal—their solitude ?

Hence comes th' enhanced delight
When crowded blooms unite
With chorus'd joy to thrill each sense,
As men's shared gladness grows intense.

The gorse that blooms alone
Long ere the frosts be gone,
Illuming with its vivid gold
The dreary moor unhued and cold.

The speedwell's blue stars seen
Crushed around by mean
Coarse growths of nettles, docks—rude breeds
Of flowerless plants and noxious weeds.

The foxglove's tardy bloom
 Enlivening the gloom
 Of winter woods with its sole beam
 'Mid the dark waste, one sunlit gleam.

The single pale primrose
 Amid half-melted snows,
 A spark of springtide's warmth close bound
 By winter's chill spread far around ;

Or rooted in a cleft
 Of wall or rock, bereft
 Of kindly juices, stunted, wild
 As some forsaken orphan child.

All seem to moan, though mute,
 " Why are we destitute
 Of the sweet countenance and aid
 By comrade flowers and hues conveyed ? "

Who can flower-markings see—*
 Illumed by sympathy,
 Nor know their feelings pierce too deep
 To find their vent in eyes that weep ?

Question the new-blown rose,
 Whence come the deeper glows
 Of colour-streaks that mark each leaf
 With varied tints in soft relief ?

* Cowper saw an indwelling divinity in every " freckle, streak, or stain " on his favourite flowers.

Are they the dainty trail,
The striping dark or pale,
Of Nature's fairy colour-brush,
Heightening each hue with richer blush?

Note the soft halo shed,
The gloss each leaf o'erspread,
Conveying a sense of tender glow
We only feel, but cannot know.

Ask the rathe snowdrop shy
That whispers, "Spring is nigh,"
Whence, 'neath the cold besodden earth,
Gained it such hues of heavenly birth.

Though it no answer yield,
We know what is revealed
In lustrous pearl-cups edged with green—
An answer mute, but not unseen.

Is not the contrast such
As man's deep feelings touch,
Between the "drop" of beauty rare
And the black soil and frozen air?

Who is not moved to see,
With dire adversity,
Some fair being struggle, human-bred,
New life extorting from the dead?

Say not such flowers clear,
"The radiance we show here
Is at our arduous efforts' cost,
In part succeeding and part lost?"

Mark, too, the struggle keen
In plant- as man-lot seen
Of tender, fairer growths that strive
With all their power—to keep alive.

Striving oft-times in vain,
As men in yearning pain,
With coarser natures, fierce to claim
All weal, *all* blessing, without shame.

And when such fair growths die
We hear their unbreathed sigh—
“We would have flowered, but we have failed,
By too fierce rivalry assailed.”

As many a human soul,
O'erpowered by life's dole,
Droops mutely, with a growing crave
For the sweet stillness of the grave,

So doth the meanest flower
Appeal by varied power
To feelings deeper than the source
Whence human tears begin their course.

Let all such pulses, stirr'd
By Fancy fair, make heard
The myriad speech of myriad flowers,
Their thought-realm making one with ours.

THE ELEGY OF THE ROSE-LEAVES.

CIRCLING round their parent tree
 As a chaplet fair to see,
 Rose-leaves breathed this elegy—
 “Breathed,” I mean, in whispers meet
 Of their fragrance passing sweet,
 Odours which my ears did greet :

* * * * *

Our life, o'erhastened by the sun,
 Too soon is done ;
 And, fallen from our mother-tree,
 Here grouped are we.
 Late we adorned her verdant crest
 As queen full drest ;
 Now we enwreath, in duty meet,
 Her lovèd feet,
 Happy, when living, to bestow
 Our radiant glow,
 And happy, dying e'en, to prove
 Our filial love,
 As courtiers kneeling round our own
 Dear mother's throne.
 Our paling splendours still attest
 How she was drest ;

Our fragrance still we waft around
Her garden ground,
Returning her life-gift in death—
Our fragrant breath.
Though fading now, our hue beseems
Its livelier gleams.
Thus hue and fragrance meetly blent
Prove our descent ;
Both with consentient voice disclose
Our kindred rose,
And, dead as living, we declare
How bright and fair
The parent tree from which we came,
And spread her fame.

UNDER THE SNOW.

OH, coldly glisteneth the frozen glow,
Though lustrously white, of the fallen snow,
But barren of growth as the barren sea,
 The desert sand,
 A brine-soil land,
Or whatever barrenness else there be.

Who could suppose that the dead-white snow
Life-giving impulses should bestow?
That, under its glistening ice-wove veil,
 The prick and thrill,
 The mastering will,
Of Nature and springtide begin to prevail?

Yet well we know that under the snow,
Its crust and its chill, far, far below,
Hidden impulses stir and move
 The fibry thread,
 The rootlet half dead,
Prompting their rise to the world above.

Under the snow, under the snow,
A warmth bestirs, though its progress be slow,

Which eye cannot see, though the mind may guess,
Whose secret force
Pursues its course
With an ever-increasing, buoyant stress.

Under the snow, under the snow,
Spring-germs quicken and burgeon and grow,
As though each seed to itself had said,
“Now must I rise
To the blue, sunn'd skies
From the moist dark womb of my winter bed.”

Under the snow, deep under the snow,
In her secret offices Nature, I trow,
Her schemes and plans elaborates well.
There her colours are mixed,
Fair forms are fixed,
Whose beauty the spring and the summer will tell.

Who, then, the source of summer would know
Must search for it under the winter snow—
The green of the trees, the fragrance of flowers,
Each manifold hue
That adorns anew
With wealth of beauty the summer bowers.

And well it may be that under the snow
The obstruction cold that represses the flow
Of human yearnings for ampler life
May add to their strength,
Till, ripe at length,
They find their free outlet with blessing rife.

“HE SUNG HISSELF TO DEATH.”

A REMINISCENCE OF A LONDON COURT.

CROSSING one morn a well-known London court,
For vice and squalor of an ill-report,
And picking heedful steps amid the filth,
The noisome harvest of o’ercrowding’s tilth,
My steps were stayed. As one amazed I stood,
Of consciousness bereft—its local mood.
Had I been sudden spirited away
To scenes as unlike these as night and day—
To verdant meadows with spring flowers gay ;
To bosky dells, soothed by the liquid chant
Of mountain brooks—strains suited to their haunt ;
To heath-clad moors, or woods, or mountain sides,
Or elsewhere where wild Nature most abides ?

For all at once there rang,
In startling onrush as a bell-peal clang,
Above the dull roar of the neighbouring street,
Notes of a lark that sang

In strains so passionately loud and sweet
It seemed as if celestial tones my ears did greet.

Startled at first by the mellifluous flood
Of sweet bird harmony, spellbound I stood ;

As if I needed first to realize,
What smote me with bewildering surprise.
No day-dream was the cause
That thrilled my ears with musical delight—
The sweet bird-descant without stay or pause :
Its source was in my sight.

Across the court from where I entered, hung
Nigh to a costermonger's open door,
A willow cage ; over it was flung
A few wild flowers, faded ; on the floor
A broken, withered turf was placed,
Whereon the tuneful minstrel stood
Which that poor lodging graced.

Drawing near, I watched intent,
As though I had been carved in wood,
The gushing outpour of that music-flood
On its sweet carolling the minstrel bent ;
A tuneful energy that almost rent,
The fog-bound circuit of the grimy court,
Piercing the ears of those who gazed
Upon the songster half-amazed,
And stopping unkempt children in their sport.

Its tiny form with ardour seemed to throb,
Although methought each ampler gush,
Each louder, more sustained music-rush
Seemed followed by a sob.
Its feet and wings beat out a tremulous time
To its descant sublime ;

And thus it sang with quivering passion high,
As though it minded were to soar,
Unto heaven's very door ;
And as in name, so effort, cleave the sky.

Yet scant were the inspirings meet,
(Compared with those its uncaged comrades greet,
Who mount from verdant turf or heathery moor,
And upward to the sunlit azure soar),
Which prompted such celestial feat.

Instead of verdant sward was the torn piece
Of turf, that haply had been green,
Though intervening weeks of time
Some surplusage of London grime,
And much deposit of its slime—
A hideous compound of foul soot and grease,
Had made its rural origin scarce seen.

And as for pleasant woods and fields,
The gladness which pure Nature yields,
For these, alas ! a dark, befogg'd, and grimy court,
Where wretched domiciles of men
Conspired to form a murky den ;
Where vice-united, might consort,
The votaries of lawless cruel sport,—
Callings that slunk from sun-lit human ken.

Nor was there aught of azure-glory high
T' inspire a bird whose true goal was the sky.
A patch of dingy, fog-infected cloud,
A sordid, filthy shroud,

Befitting the foul court it roofed,
 While heaven's own blueness it aloofed.
 Were scarce an object to attract,
 And urge a heaven-enamoured minstrel to enact
 His keen, aspiring part,
 With fitting eagerness of voice and heart.

Yet was the sweet bird-song
 A blithesome carol, radiant and strong ;
 Except that sometimes after singing long,
 And at a hurried tremulous rate
 It seemed somewhat to palpitate,
 Sad premonition of his nearing fate.

* * * * *

For on the morrow's morn returning,
 To the same dingy court,
 With sweet remembrance, still burning
 Of yesterday's sweet song, and yearning
 For further music of such radiant sort,
 I paused, listening 'mid the din,
 The street without, the court within ;
 But nothing now I heard
 Of the loud carol of that joyous bird—
 Nought but the dull loathsome human roar
 Its strain had partly quelled the day before.

I drew towards the well-remembered spot,
 The coster's home. I saw the cage still there,
 But now the man, upstanding on a chair,
 Was in the act, clearly a grievous lot,
 Of taking down the cage from off its nail.

I needed not the sky-bird's fate inquire,
 The cage disclosed a piteous tale—
 The bird lay dead upon the piece
 Of ragged turf, besmeared with London grease.

 Could fate more earthly, dire,

 A bird befall,

 By song, and form, and flight, and all
 Fitted to heaven's own radiance to aspire.

 With grief and pity deeply stirr'd,

 I asked, "What's happened to the bird?"

"Poor Dick," replied the man with trembling breath,

 "Is gone—*he sung himself to death.*

 Ah, sir, he wur a bird to sing ;

 He'd beat, I'm sure, most anything
 That ever ope'd a beak or wore a wing.

 But never did I hear 'im in such voice,

 His note so clear, his song so choice,

 As yesterday all through.

 You heard 'im in the morning, sir, say you ?

 Well, on he sung, until the afternoon,

 The same wild gushing, madly rushing tune.

 And started it again to-day,

 Though in a weaker sort of way,

 Till breakfast time, and then he stopp'd,

 And on his perch he feebly hopp'd,

 Then from his perch he fell and died."

His voice grew tremulous, and the fellow cried.

 I, too, felt moisture on my cheek,

 And for a moment did not speak ;

 Again he spoke—a tear brushed quick aside :

"What ailed the bird, to sing in that wild way
 Just upon dying—blest if I can say ;
 He'd spent most likely all his breath,
 So he just *sung hisself to death.*"

* * * * *

Homeward returning through the crowded street,
 I mused upon the coster's words ;
 They touchèd tenderly responsive chords
 Within me. Back returned the death-song sweet
 Which yesterday my wondering ears did greet.
 And now I marvelled more,
 Than I had done before.

What pulse of joy or feeling stirr'd the strain
 Which seemed the outgush of some blissful pain ?
 Did the sweet songster know,
 And knowing, did his vocal rapture glow
 The more intense ?

He was departing hence—

Was his swan-song a pæan of joy,
 Forecasting his near freedom from annoy
 Of all incongruous sounds and sights ?

Was there some glimmering sense
 Of other more befitting bird-delights ?

Did his uplifted eye,
 Piercing the fog roof of the grimy court,
 See an unclouded sky

Of heaven-aspiring birds the meet resort ?

Thus were his melody tuned by distant thrill,
 A far-off impulse did his bosom fill.

Not to that court addressed,
Was the sweet requiem that closed his life,
But to a home of rest
Serene, and far removed from the strife
Of greed and crime which did the spot infest,
Some fair bird—"island of the blest."

There it might find,
In startling contrast from its grimy den,
True scope for song and vision now confined
By smoke and filth, discoloured homes of men.
There, too, the inciting stings,
The soaring instincts of his restless wings,
Would find full vent,
Commensurate with their natural intent.

It could not be
But that wings meant the wingèd to be free,
To rise and soar,
As near as might be to heaven's sunlit door,
Not hopping from the cage perch to its floor.

What impulses to song,
As such a yearning could be strong ;
No wonder if such rapturous longing stirr'd
The whole joy-gamut of the bird ;
No marvel, so unwonted was its glee,
Such fierce abandon marked its minstrelsy.

Or haply, meant the song-defiance loud
A dying protest ; it remained uncowed
By adverse influences circled round ?
That its brave heart could still aspire,
Beyond its actual sordid bound,

That it could glow with stirring of heaven's fire
While close enchained to earth's most loathsome mire.

Was this the rend'ring of the song
That thrilled that dismal spot the whole day long?
"Though Nature destined me to mount on high,
And fill with joy the summer sky,
Yet fate's malific power
Hath falsified sweet Nature's dower,
And left me in this dingy den to die;
Yet mean I still to sing,
As if all unimpeded were my wing,
And I breathed buoyantly the sweets of spring,
Till song and life, expiring in one breath,
Both end in death."

Or, lastly, was that dying song a rapt farewell,
A tuneful, radiant lark-befitting knell,
To those who failed to tell
The meaning of the music that so long
Pierced the dull hearing of the unwashed throng?
Mayhap the memory left,
As falls when men are of some good bereft,
Might stir a keener sense
To feelings dulled and dense
Of goodness, beauty—all that glorious world
Which in the skylarks music is unfurled.

Certain—if 'prisoned larks *must* sing,
To crowded, dingy human dens,
As if far skyward, on untiring wing,
They breathed an atmosphere all unlike men's;

And if their 'prisoned song *must* be
As full of buoyancy and glee,
As though the caged birds were free—
Then didst thou, minstrel dead, do well thy duty,
Uttering joyous strains of love and beauty
With spent, and yet resolvèd dying breath,
“Singing,” as thy owner said, “thyself to death.”

EBB AND FLOW.

ALL things living life do show
By perpetual ebb and flow.

Æons come and æons go,
Their courses marked by ebb and flow.

Nature's pulse beats high or low
With alternate ebb and flow.

And with Nature's pulse e'en so
Veer men's lives with ebb and flow.

Rhythmic, whether fast or slow,
Their progressive ebb and flow.

Nations wane, or rise and grow,
By the self-same ebb and flow.

Erring men both reap and sow
With recurrent ebb and flow.

Systems largely to and fro
Their life attest by ebb and flow.

Truths alternate pale and glow
With continual ebb and flow.

Of existence all we know
Is its ceaseless ebb and flow.

THE DEATH OF THE OLD YEAR.

THE year is dying,
Around his bed we watch the end now nighing ;
We mark each gasp by sympathy's soft sighing.

Your finger lay
Upon his failing pulse ; from thence you may
Detect the hasting of his life away.

The year is old,
His grave is dug in time's huge churchyard cold,
To mix with all past years in common mould.

His strength is spent,
His stalwart form has long been worn and bent ;
His death we cannot stay, though we lament.

His beard so white,
His pinched and shrunken visage, all unite
Foreboding of his exit at midnight.

His deep-sunk eye
Seems with its glazed, far-off look t'esp
Things long remote—stone-blind to objects nigh.

One skinny hand
Points a lean finger, as to some far land ;
One holds an hour-glass with fast-ebbing sand.

Not long ago
We watchèd on expectancy's tip-toe
His birth ; now we regard his dying throe.

Mysterious then,
He hid his face and treasure from prying men,
Now ope are all his secrets to their ken.

Kind or unkind,
As he was to us, we are not now blind
To act-avouched intentions of his mind.

Toll now the bell,
Bewail the passing year with sobbing knell,
Let every tongue his genuine merits tell.

Now, he is dead ;
The last sad stroke of midnight, as it sped,
Both knell and requiem for the dying said.

His eyes now close ;
Fold his lean arms in seemliest death-pose,
Make fit the dead year for his long repose.

Then with due care
For his immediate obsequies prepare ;
His grave with bye-gone years now let him share.

Next, read his will ;
Note well what purpose he would fain fulfil,
What teaching by his life he would instil.

Some legacy
He surely left behind for you and me ;
How much, what kind, we in due time shall see.

So to the past—
Our duty rendered—we, 'tis time, now haste ;
And at the new year's feet our fealty cast.

The old year gone,
We turn—as chauging men have ever done—
From the set orb—to greet the rising sun.

NEWNESS OF LIFE.

I WOULD not change for any other dower
Of feeling, thought, or fancy's subtle power
The sensibility for ever keen
To Nature's signs and wonders heard or seen.

I guard against dread memory's listlessness,
The hardening of the tender wonder-stress
Continued frequency is wont to yield
Throughout the range of men's sensation-field.

So doth the sense of being, its why and whence
Not less become, but ever more immense
In the large vistas which maturing thought
Through many patient pondering years have wrought.

To me the world is more a fairy-land
To-day, more strangely and grotesquely grand
Than when, a puzzled child, I first began
The beautiful, riddling wonderment to scan.

Each golden sunrise stirs a pleasure new,
Each sunset claims fresh recognition due,
The changing glories of the clouds impart
Increasing ravishment to eye and heart.

Returning summers smile with newer zest,
The last spring glory ever seems the best,
Each tree's new green glows greener than the old,
And fresher hues and beauties flowers unfold.

The ocean's mighty marvels now are more
Than when, in childish dread, I paced its shore ;
Its strangeness, vastness, wildness, stir and strife,
Its ever changing moods—its myriad life.

The starry heavens appear still more sublime,
Their boundless reach of number, space, and time
Induce a tremulous awe far more intense
Than when they first appalled my youthful sense.

To Nature-culture heedfully pursued,
Her glories grow more glorious, long reviewed ;
Her marvel in its strangeness asks more awe,
Her beauty in its lustre owns less flaw.

“ With brains,” the painter in the story said
He mixed his colours ; they were live not dead.
With brains, too, we must Nature's fair hues mix,
When on our mental canvas we would fix

Her rarest beauties, nor alone with brains,
But tenderest sympathy her treasured gains
Must add to form the mingled sentiment
That yields to Nature-sense its full content.

That sense, enriched with thought and feeling grows,
And in their combined lenses Nature shows
With tenfold brilliancy of form and hue,
Each aspect seeming still more bright and new.

To such deep sense of Nature all things yield,
Not visual impress only, but that sealed
From common gaze—the vivifying soul
That makes the universe one living whole.

FAITH.

THE PROGRESS OF TRUTH.

I. THE START.

“THROUGH all thy life strive ever for the Truth;
This is man’s holiest guerdon, and his best,
Life’s only function that stays wisdom’s test.”
Such was the pious rede I learned in youth.

And I deep stirr’d, for that supremest sooth,
Straightway began a long and arduous quest;
And long pursued it with increasing zest,
Serving as he who serves one void of ruth.

“Where is the Truth?” I asked, of which men speak.
“What path is that whereon I should her seek?”
My Truth I deem what in my mother’s eyes
Seems voiced, or in her tongue tender and wise;
Nay, can a child embrace Truth’s guiding norm.
In fairer guise than a good mother’s form.

II. VARIED VIEWS OF TRUTH.

But on the growing youth life looms more large,
And with enlarging life Truth grows more broad;
A varied route now seems Truth’s ocean road,
Rousing, mayhap, his energies letharge.

Who'd glide through life on Cleopatra's barge?
Many I found the routes to Truth's abode,
Hence zeal and care I dared not let corrode,
Now of Truth's wider sea I cleaved the marge.

Thus came to me the anxious age of choice,
When I behoved to mark Truth's own clear voice
Among the world's wide roar ; that course to steer
Which daily to Truth's haven draws more near.
So cautiously I chose upon Truth's chart
The course most following my childhood's start.

III. TRUTH'S COURSE.

Men say the course of Truth is ever straight,
Meaning, perhaps, that straight it ought to be :
Nay, is, in pure idea or theory—
Of mundane facts, the hyper-mundane state.

But in reality, which doth abate
Ideal glamour, like a ship at sea
Truth often steers its course unevenly—
A tortuous zigzag, at unequal rate.

For Truth, to face opposing winds, must tack ;
The popular gale beats rarely on her back.
Then must she her undeviating course so steer,
As Falsehood's shoals and currents not to near ;
So seeming wayward, Truth preserves her course,
Onward impelled by strange resistless force.

IV. EXPERIENCE.

My devious course I mean not to rehearse,
Nor tell how oft I trimm'd my modest sail,
So I might catch and use the wayward gale
To gain Truth's port. Nor yet could I coerce,

Into the narrow limits of this verse,
The rocks and shoals, which might almost avail
To make my voyage to Truth's harbour fail,
Or by sad wreckage turn it to my curse.

Let it suffice, my well-meant enterprise
Than other such attempts, was not more wise ;
Like all truth-seekers, oft was I deceived,
And falsehood's glamour for pure Truth believed,
Yet I persisted, in the assured trust,
That if I sought for Truth—find Truth I must.

V. TRUTH FOUND.

After long painful quest, at last I found
What I at least as Truth supreme must deem ;
Nay, what Truth is, and not what she might seem.
Yet did her presence somewhat me confound.

Strange was the radiance that her beauty crowned,
As things long heard of, seen, flash a new gleam ;
Or as the light makes real the morning dream,
When sleepers in half-slumber are half-drowned.

Then learnt I, Truth seems strange to human sight,
If haply overpowering be its light,
Until with use the vision gain more strength,
And man upon Truth's self can gaze at length ;
So questioned I at first, " Is this the Truth,
Which I have eager sought from early youth ? "

VI. STRANGENESS OF NEW TRUTH.

New Truth seems ever strange, however fair,
Except by most her Truthdom be professed ;
So for a while I deemed my search unblest,
For that my find the fair name did not bear

Of Truth confessed : being, as she was, most rare.
Wherefore men said, " This product of thy quest
Is not *the* Truth, but in her vesture dressed—
A lie, as all her attributes declare."

Then answered I, " That mine is not your Truth
But stirs my joy, though once it moved my ruth ;
But truthfully to truth-search given, my mind,
Whate'er it be, I must approve my find.
Content am I with this : I know full well
No other Truth threw o'er me such a spell."

VII. THE CRITERIA OF TRUTH.

Then mused I on the reasonings of my foes :—
What are Truth's tests? What is that mastering force
Which binds conviction firmly to her course?
Each man on this must witness what he knows.

And I perceived—for this my Truth I chose—
'Twixt light and dark it made me most divorce,
To solve earth's puzzles it claimed most resource,
And offered from earth doubts the most repose.

Besides—for Truth, methinks, must sate the heart,
And of sweet Fancy's play, too, form a part—
I found my Truth well ministered to these,
And thus my varied yearnings served to please.
In brief: best Truth is that which most rest brings,
Best light which lightens most earth's murkiest things.

VIII. MUST TRUTH BE KEPT OR COMMUNICATED?

Truth then being found—so far as one might find,
Seize, form, and hold—part of the Infinite,
Another problem now beset my sight,
And with its questing exercised my mind.

Shall he who knows what 'tis to have been blind,
And knows as well what blessed his eyes with light,
Keep for himself what made him see aright,
Haply, what was ordained for all mankind?

Since this new Truth hath blessed me, shall I yield
To craven fear, lest being to man revealed,
My treasure might perchance be spurned and mocked?
Nay, though men mostly keep their treasures locked,
Truth were not mine, unless I might impart,
And hence will I proclaim it on the mart.

IX. TRUTH ON THE MART.

So took I to the market my true thought,
Slow mellowed product of a wealth of years,
Sunn'd by warm effort and bedewed by tears.
I reasoned—on the mart where Truth is sought

By thinking men, this haply may be bought,
For this Truth's ripest fruit to me appears.
Alas! no mart I found—nay, some with jeers
My truth disdained—said others, "It is nought."

Another said, "My friend, your Truth is old,
Sell Truth which hitherto hath been untold."
"Nay," said a third, "it hath but too much youth."
Then said a friend, "Men care not for the Truth
Divorced from use and gain. Truth, like pure gold,
Must be alloyed ere it be used or sold."

X. TRUTH ALLOYED.

“So from the mart take home thy Truth so dear,
Abate its pureness and thy hasty joy,
Mix well thy smelted treasure with alloy
Of metals old and toughened by long wear.

“Take customed thought—Tradition’s morbid fear
Of growth or change. Faith’s ancient forms employ,
Nor fear thy Truth’s real essence to destroy
So as Truth semblance it may still appear.

“No sane man takes to market what is new,
Whose worth is known and treasured by but few,
Nor deem thou Truth wears an unveiled face,
For the coarse crowds that throng the market-place ;
They own Truth-search forget not, neither thwart,
Thou didst not find thy Truth upon the mart.”

XI. MURMURING.

So urged my friend ; and I, disconsolate,
Upon his harsh advice began to muse.
Much of his plea I darèd not refuse,
And my new ardour somewhat ’gan to abate.

Yet soon I answered, “ It doth seem Truth’s fate
To have small worth, compared with things men use
For sordid purposes—for this day’s news,
Or for news hoped for of to-morrow’s date.

“ But when into the mart I took my Truth
 ’Twas my sole wish, like the blind hope of youth,
 That men should note her lustre and admire,
 Possessed as I by love’s inburning fire.
 Nor did I mean to sell my Truth for aught,
 But for like pains wherewith I had her bought.”

XII. RESOLUTION.

My Truth must I then blend with base alloy,
 Because men prize it not unmixèd, pure ?
 Shall I use falsehood as a human lure,
 Or earthy dross as tested gold employ ?

What were this, but my life-work to destroy,
 Its sacred task as worthless to abjure,
 To urge that Falsehood than Truth’s self was truer,
 To rob me of my Truth-imparted joy ?

Never ! let those who will sophisticate
 The Truth, as knaves man’s food adulterate,
 Not recking the mal-nurture or the plaint
 Of living organs clogg’d by poison’s taint ;
 At least I will not offer, for mere ruth,
 What I dare not avouch as provèd Truth.

XIII. FURTHER ADVICE.

Then, said my friend, “ Thou readest not aright,
 The record of Truth’s progress in the vast
 Historic page—nor in thy mental past :
 Truth springs not upon men as the new light

“ Of tropic sunrise flashes down the night ;
But steals with luminous growth more broad than fast,
And slanting shadows wide and far doth cast,
Fitting the gradual sentience of man’s sight.

“ Bethink ! *Thy* truth, at first with error blent,
Itself approved—though far was thine intent
On partial unripe truth thy gaze to fix,
Or with its purity alloy to mix ;
Thy mind the smelting fire which Truth’s crude ore,
Fused from its dross, with labour long and sore.”

XIV. CONCLUSION.

To all such pleas I turned a stone-deaf ear ;
Abhorrent to my soul was Truth debased,
And purposely her beauty fair defaced,
So to man’s false ideals she might come near.

Nor, though a devious course I chanced to steer,
Dared I affirm Truth thus might best be chased ;
Rather my own blurr’d chart I had erased,
And Truth’s course marked anew with lines more clear.

But be it, most men now my thought refuse,
I will not for their pleasure Truth abuse,
But show it as a higher, rarer light,
To men whose clearer vision crave the sight.
Some time, mayhap, others who make like quest,
May deem the Truth I found, of all Truths, best.

ON DEFINING GOD.

OBSERVE yon concave blue,
That seems to close around our human view,
And ends by sun and star
Our keenest survey of those heavens afar.

And yet we know full well,
False is the specious tale our senses tell ;
That is no azure sky,
Or solid vault, that meets our lifted eye.

What curtains round our gaze,
The background of the sun or starry maze,
Is but blue-tinted light
That veils from us the aërial infinite.

And so, when we define
Great heaven's immensity by verbal sign,
We act as though our bent,
Were here again to feign a *firmament*.

Words in array we place,
And deem therewith we see God face to face.
Poor fools, and blind ; not seeing
Our words but mask and hide His unsearched Being.

THE SCOPE OF HUMAN ENERGIES.

I would not know, if knowledge fitly might
All solaceful beliefs veil from my sight ;
A clouded day is better than dark night.

I would not search, if searching surely grew
To find the falsehood, " There is nothing true,"
And for life's labyrinth, we have no clue.

I would not think, if thinking always taught
Sense of futility in all things thought ;
So thought, by thinking, brought itself to naught.

I would not feel, if each true passion's power
Served but to prove how barren were its dower ;
How all sweet feelings pall or turn to sour.

I would not hope, if hope's most ardent strain
Reaped merest hopelessness as its sole gain ;
Who would take physic to increase his pain ?

Man's energies, with mighty promptings rife,
Must needs achieve some worthy end of strife,
To still the fretful unrest of his life.

'Tis true, his best achievements have their scope,
However unbounded be his faith and hope ;
Beyond his arms full stretch, no man can grope

But in its sphere each ardour finds some sway,
Some fruit men still may reap of each essay ;
At least each effort doth its fret allay.

Then, in the pursuit of the True and Real,
I fain would know and search, and hope and feel,
To furthest scope of each—until its seal
Of due achievement answer my appeal.

WHAT IS RELIGION?

(AFTER SCHLEIERMACHER.)

NOT a moral codex taught,
In legal maxims hard and cold,
By legal minds together brought,
From ethic teachers new or old.

Nor yet a mode or form of thought,
Of God or man, the world or life,
By various diff'ring systems wrought,
Inducing hate and wordy strife.

Religion is a secret fire,
Kindling spontaneous in the breast,
The soul's instinctive blind desire
To *feel* its God, and be at rest.

Religion is a sense Divine,
Perception of the Infinite,
The pure heart's pulse, the only sign,
To mark its being or prove its might.

Above, below, and all around,
In thing without, in thought within,
Is pure Religion's hallowed ground,
The temple we must worship in.

To lean in trust upon the Power,
Through all the universe made known,
This is the soul's divinest dower,
This is Religion—this alone.

WHERE IS RELIGION?

(AFTER SCHLEIERMACHER.)

Not in the text of Holy Writ,
Or words or writings elsewhere brought,
With sacred fire though once up-lit,
But now—the mere dead signs of thought.

Not in a church's rule or plan,
Its public prayer or sacred rite,
Imperfectly devised by man,
To body forth the Infinite.

Not in confessions nor in creeds,
Or lifeless dogmas cut and squared,
Or pious acts or ritual deeds,
For quickening holy life prepared.

Such formal systems we discard,
No vital warmth can they inspire,
Like lava streams, now cold and hard,
Which erst flowed on—a living fire.

Such burnt-out systems have we seen,
Embers instead of burning glow,
The ashes tell where fire hath been,
No further use—cold embers know.

But in the heart, experience-taught,
Of faith and hope and love which tells
In th' infinite of human thought,
There, there alone, Religion dwells.

QUOTATIONS AND COMMENTS (IV.).

*THE PIOUS HINDU'S PATH OF
PERFECTION.*

Quotation.

“ALAS! Thus it always is with man. The source of evil is within us. Egotism deludes us with the feeling of possession when there is nothing to possess. This is the great enemy—the *Myness* in me.” *

Comment.

Self-haunted, I mourn my most piteous fate,
In perfection I would, if I could, become great ;
But I cannot, since I neither can quell nor make flee,
My deadliest torment—the *Myness* in me.

It cleaves to me closely wherever I go,
At all times 'tis near, a persistent foe ;
It hears with my ears, with my eyes it doth see,
It steals all my senses—this *Myness* in me.

* “The Bhagavad Gîtâ,” translated by Mohini M. Chatterji, M.A., p. 16.

Then incursion it makes to the region within,
All consciousness thieves—a most grievous sin,
From its ravishment reason nor feeling is free,
All my being it leads captive—this Myness in me.

To crush it I strive with the whole of my power,
I repel its vitality hour to hour,
When it claims recognition, I never agree,
I give always the lie to the Myness in me.

Sometimes by starvation its strength I bring down,
In thought's profound depths I its energies drown,
In vain, for I find by dire weakness's fee,
I cannot slay the Myness and not kill the Me.

I own I have nothing, nor well can I guess,
How I came to suppose there are things I possess ;
Indeed, a delusion it almost seems to be,
To assert that I have either Myness or Me.

Placed thus in a strait, my duty I know,
But 'tis hemm'd in by limits I cannot o'erthrow ;
I fear it is true, though I must disagree,
My Myness will last just as long as my Me.

LIFE AND THOUGHT.

UNSOUGHT came Life to me,
And with it brought,
A precious, perilous gift—
The gift of Thought.

Life grew, and with its growth
Grew also Thought,
Like twin-born beings, from birth
To rivalry wrought.

First, Life claimed precedence,
In that it sought
To merge in its own being,
The being of Thought.

Said Life, "No useful end
Is gained by Thought,
And all its doubts and quests
Come but to naught."

But Thought in turn replied,
"Life cannot choose
But live; nor yet can Thought
Its subtler being refuse.

“ By direful stress ondriven,
I still must quest,
Though answer full and true,
Ne'er bring me rest.

“ Thou, Life, mayst easy live,
Deprived of Thought,
Nay, myriads pass through life
To think untaught.

“ Yet to man's life doth Thought,
Though vain its quest,
Lend all the power that makes
It nobly blest.”

Then, sighing, Life replied,
“ Too-bounded scope,
Poor foolish thought, gives Life
For thy great hope.

“ And space and time, and all
That men call being,
Are objects much too small
For thy far-seeing.”

To which Thought once more said,
“ Thus it must be,
That Thought can more than Life,
And further see.

Wherefore thou seest, Life,
Howe'er distraught,
By her great quest—far higher
Than Life is Thought.”

* * * * *

Then I at last, well-learned
In power of Thought,
And worth of Life—to soothe
Their rivalry sought.

Thus to the twain said I,
“What needs this strife?
Twin mysteries are ye,
Both Thought and Life.”

VITA BREVIS, ARS LONGA.

BRIEF is Life, while Art is long,
Countless truths, some weak, some strong,
Crowd around the thinker's feet,
All acceptance fair entreat.

Brief is Life, while Art is long,
Hear the luring syren-song,
As Truth's daughters mocking ask
Men t' achieve a hopeless task.

Brief is Life, while Art is long,
See how Science doth prolong
Endless vistas as men move,
Tracking e'er their viewless love.

Brief is Life, while Art is long,
Fairest forms of Fancy throng
Shaping minds, nor brush nor pen,
Could duly render all to men.

Brief is Life, and Art is long,
What remains for wise and strong?
But as skill shall best impart,
Man's brief Life make long with Art.

QUOTATIONS AND COMMENTS (V.).

VIRTUE, PAST AND PRESENT.

Quotation.

“SHE can teach ye how to climb
Higher than the sphery chime,
Or if Virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her.”*

Comment.

Then let heaven stoop,
As stoops the eagle that with downward swoop
From its empyrean height descends,
And to its weak-wing'd offspring lends
(Fluttering, faltering in mid air),
Sustaining and paternal share
Of pinions equal to the flight
Of heaven's supremest height.

For Virtue now is weak,
Or perhaps more truly might I speak,
Is feeble grown to human eyes,
And estimates—which are but lies.

* Milton, *Comus*.

In her true being,
Apart from men's perverted modes of seeing,
Virtue could no more feeble be,
Than power be lacking to the Deity,
Or length of æons to Eternity.

But to men's eyes,
Clad in their conceptual disguise,
Virtue is feeble grown,
Lacking in strength and tone,
Too weak to stand alone,
Void of inherent power to bless,
Or to incur temptation's stress.
Dependent on some mightier power,
For all her vigour or her wisdom's dower.
A puny sickly thing,
That can mount only by an alien wing ;
A helpless, sightless being,
That must be led by others' sense of seeing.

Of old it was not so,
As human records show :
Once all wise men did deem
Virtue herself supreme ;
She was Heaven's own ally,
Co-natured and eternally.
Nay Virtue gave to Deity the right
O'er reasoning mortals to assert his might,
Her sanction was the primal source
Of the Divinity's divinest force.

Men did not then require
 For serving Virtue lucrous hire :
 They did not say,
 As hirelings clamouring for pay,
 "Now every virtuous action must we weigh,
 And its extremest worth
 We must be paid ; by preference, now on earth,
 If not, in heaven, upon some future day."

What noble men then said
 Was this ; or rather what they sang,
 In duteous strains that far outrang
 The music of the "sphery chime"
 Of that primordial time,
 Ere Virtue from the earth had fled,
 Or ere her human rule had 'minished,
 When she gave law to heaven's eterne array,
 And e'en Omnipotence bowed to her sway.

* * * * *

"Supreme is Virtue, good and true,
 All her behests we gladly do ;
 This is our honour, as our due,
 Our wisdom, truth, and goodness too.

"No wage we ask—we crave no pay,
 Or now or at some future day ;
 Virtue's true guerdon we gainsay
 When baser, added wealth we pray,

"Heaven gave us Virtue as the best
 Of all its gifts to make us blest ;

Our souls its worth supreme attest :
We in their judgment joy to rest.

“ Virtue is health—but he would rave
Who, when health’s laws availed to save
Him from disease, or from the grave
Some added guerdon still should crave.

“ Virtue is bliss—but who should ask,
While in its joyance he doth bask,
That heaven would give—as for a task,
Due payment—reason must enmask.

“ Virtue hath self-sufficingness,
Inherent is her power to bless,
And we in our worst trials’ stress
Her own calm solace must confess.

“ We need no future to make good,
What is our soul’s e’er present food ;
Those who for self-ends have pursued
Virtue, are not her true-born brood.”

So men once held, and haply yet a few
Still do so deem, and Virtue fair pursue
With the pure selflessness that is her due.
But in men’s common notions—now, alas !
Virtue hath come to quite another pass ;
She must be fortified by props and guards,
She must be bribed by wages and rewards,
Paid down, too, in a medium not her own,

Base coin of aliens to herself and throne,
Else is esteemèd bankrupt and undone.
Like a decaying merchant, she must keep afloat
Her trade by many a promissory note.

Now every virtuous act
Hath its own price as by a huckster's pact ;
The virtuous deed or word is good no longer
In its true self, each must be rendered stronger
By earthly bliss or sordid gain,
Or unreal riddance from corporeal pain,
While for a few short virtuous years men ask the fee
Of bliss consummate through eternity.

This is, I trow, the strain—
Breathing mere lust of gain,
Which men now vent amain ;
At least which shares the larger part
Of every world-inspired heart.

“ With men of old we do agree,
Virtue should claim our fealty ;
For all her blessings fain would we
In adoration bend the knee.

“ Virtue is great, and we her worth
Are taught to celebrate from birth ;
Of blessings they shall have no dearth,
Who loudly chant her praise on earth.

“ Virtue is good, for we believe
We for her service shall receive
Less share of human ills that grieve,
And more of profit shall achieve.

“ In Virtue, then, we deem it best,
Our hopes and efforts to invest ;
If now we draw not interest,
In future time we shall be blest.

“ Though Virtue’s sons know want or care,
Or ills still greater have to bear,
God will their lot with justice square,
And give heaven-bliss to mend earth-fare.

“ Thus every virtuous word or deed
To us seems but the fruitful seed
Which shall in time a harvest breed
Beyond our hope, desire, or need.

“ Who, then, would not sweet Virtue praise,
And to her honour altars raise,
Who blesses us in this world’s ways,
And gives us heaven for endless days? ”

So must the lofty poet mend his rede,
And Virtue from her pride of place recede
Her mission now is not to make men climb
“ Higher than the sphery chime,”
But men’s earth-avarice to feed,
And satisfy their other-worldly greed.

LIFE, AND DEATH, AND TRUTH.

The following sonneted mind-history was written on the death of a personal friend, an ardent and uncompromising truth-seeker, who devoted all his life to the eschatology of the Old and New Testaments. After having long maintained that the Apocalypse of St. John found its sole fulfilment in the Fall of Jerusalem, he abandoned that theory, and accepted that mostly favoured by advanced thinkers on the Continent, viz. that the Apocalypses, both of the Old and New Testaments, were based upon dreamy and sanguine views of an impossible future. As he considered the eschatology to be the very centre-point of the New Testament, he was inclined to consider Christianity—apart from its moral teaching—a gigantic illusion. These latter views he incorporated in a work which occupied the last working years of his life, and a copy of which he held in his hand just before his death, with the repeated vaunt, "*If this is not the truth, there is no truth.*" It may be added, that in former years he had been just as certain of his earlier and, perhaps, more probable theory.

I. THE ARGUMENT.

"TRUTH is the fruit of life, the crown of death,
And living, dying, none more blest than he
Who plucks that noble fruitage from life's tree.
And such, thank God, am I"—with halting breath
But radiant face the dying man thus saith.
None worthier sure to claim Truth's victory,
For of its gospel warmer votary
Truth's storied records nowhere witnesseth.

Thus death, now nearing, seemed the crown of life,
 Co-mated sequently as fruit and flower,
 The victor's wreath adorning warrior strife,
 Truth-wooing, crownèd by her wedded dower ;
 Meet union in a world by wisdom plann'd,
 Of cause and sequence in one holy band.

II. THE CONVICTION.

“ If this be not the Truth, Truth is there none.”
 So spake Truth's witness, dying, all the while
 He clasped caressingly with placid smile
 His written record of Truth's battle won,
 The printed outcome of life's best work done.
 Noblest conviction, if all free from guile,
 The last recording stone of many a mile
 Of life's long road from rise to set of sun.

Much-cherished volume, fruit of many hours
 Of patient thought and eager industry,
 Rendered effective by keen mental powers,
 Who would decry such fruit of knowledge's tree ?
 Alas, that now such fruit may men deceive,
 As once in Eden it beguiled Eve !

III. TRUTH FIXED BY DEATH.

Death slits the fine-spun silken woof of thought,
 The while it severs man's coarse warp of time,
 And gives last thoughts, which with last moments
 rhyme,
 A permanence they might not else have wrought.

For while thought lives the thinker *will* be taught,
And germs erst cultured in his early prime
Will ever train to ripeness more sublime,
Till thought with life in time both come to naught.

So had the aged thinker's life endured
To after years, obeying its custom'd norm ;
No guarantee could haply have assured,
Of Truth he had not found still nobler form,
But death fast sealed his latest truth-impress,
And this with his last breath he fain would bless.

IV. TRUTH-SEARCH.

Man's thought at starting takes its lonely road,
In part, long worn, his elders' well-trod way,
In part, self-traced, the course his light of day
Suggests as best befitting to be trod
By one who knows things in his special mode,
Thus onward led by Truth's inspiring ray,
His mental journey he begins t' essay.
Hoping its end shall be Truth's own abode.

But as he onward moves from scene to scene,
He claims each outlook as his very own,
Nor recks of change of view from what has been
To prospects new, content that he alone,
In every change, preserves his mode of sight,
Or, what he once saw wrong, he now sees right.

V. THE PERSONAL NATURE OF TRUTH.

The eye but sees, however keen its powers,
That which its own clear vision truly yields,
The verdure of the forests or the fields,
The many-coloured glory of the flowers ;
And each outlook of dark or sunny hours,
Is bounded by the lid each eye that shields,
And by the visual power the organ wields ;
No other eye can share its secret dowers.

So Truth to each must have its private bound,
The scene within the seer's own purview ;
And what the scene is, in its own profound
No stranger knows—no stranger ever knew.
The Truth to every man is his alone,
And brooks no personal rival near its throne.

VI. UNITY AND MULTIPLICITY OF TRUTH.

Each Truth is true to him who sees it so ;
But, " Truth is one," men say, and rightly say,
Yet is its oneness like the light of day,
Which all things seen doth manifoldly show.
And what in myriad guise men can but know,
Is seen as one by that pure heavenly ray
Which all things views in its inclusive sway,
And sees them truly whether men do or no.

Nor can of each man's power such private scope
Be deemed privation ; howsoe'er his will
May soar or fancy, man can never hope
His bounds to pass—he must be finite still,
No hardship is it, if regarded right,
His earth-born limits are not infinite.

VII. POSSIBILITY OF MISTAKEN TRUTH-SEARCH.

Thus what the old truth-seeker, dying, deemed
Truth's purest golden ore, his brother men
Claimed to have provèd once and oft again
By partial views to be unsoundly schemed ;
Nay, e'en from falsehood to be unredeemed.
His Truth's last word, the best work of his pen,
To those who of the matter had most ken,
Scarce more than error's infant lispings seemed.

But this, in sooth, he had himself foreknown,
Nor recked the adverse judgments he foreknew ;
Mere dread of men the thinker had outgrown,
“ Truth ever was,” he said, “ the meed of few.”
And so he hugg'd his conscious triumph won—
“ If this be not the Truth, Truth is there none.”

VIII. CHANGE COMPATIBLE WITH TRUTH-SEARCH.

Yet had himself determined years before,
Of a quite other—nay, opposing view,
Which now he just as strongly held untrue,

Although by those best skillèd in such lore
The earlier found acceptance more and more.

His faith, though then misplaced, again was new,
And more resolved Truth's guerdon to pursue,
As ships once wrecked, again put off from shore.

Thus froward thought, advancing knowledge, grows
To changed views ; old prospects vanish quite,
Or are transformed by what man newly knows,
To views as differing as day from night ;
Though in thought's varied many-motived range
Not always is the best the newest change.

IX. THE TRUE MEED OF TRUTH-SEARCH.

The meed of Truth-search hence we learn to scan,
Man's noblest function—'tis confest by all,
The worthiest men most gladly hear its call :
Yet in his highest reach, man is but man,
His loftiest effort but a human "can."

So must his highest Truth-search ever fall
Far short of what is truest, and seem small
To knowledge that all knowable can span.

But duty urges, nay, our bliss is still
To seek for Truth by every power we own ;
We may, if well-directed be our skill,
Enlarge the scope of things humanly known :
If not, we still must seek, e'en though unsooth
May be our final boast we've found the Truth.

X. OBJECTION ANSWERED.

“Then is Truth-search a mock’ry !” might some say,
If by fruition it be all unblest ;
For mortals so ill-placed, ’twere surely best
To spend their efforts, through life’s little day,
On merest dalliance of lust or play.
So they might reap due fruitage from their quest,
Nor always suffer from the dire unrest
Of those who pine in painful yearning’s sway.

But man is so much moulded of heaven-fire,
As soon of mere satiety to sate,
And, though his sphere be bounded, his desire
Is still to pass from earth through some heaven-gate ;
In fine, his highest impulse and content
Is search for Truth and Good, though in it he be spent.

XI. TRUTH IN THE FUTURE WORLD.

In search must we then our For-Ever spend,
No surety greet us in the æons to come ?
Must eager hope aye wander without home,
And in vain craving all its powers expend ?
A lot so dire, with goodness who can blend ?
So men, all weary with the ceaseless roam,
Truth search in Nature, and in printed tome
Hope all earth-doubts with certainty to end.

Fond dream, mayhap, of those who fail to learn
The worth of search for men of finite scope,
Who, though Truth's value they in part discern,
See not its needs of eager life and hope.
If heaven were but satiety's abode,
To home, Truth's pilgrim might prefer his road.

XII. INFINITE CONDITIONS OF INFINITE TRUTH.

Man's Truth is girt by its own narrow marge,
The sphere of outward sense, of inward mind,
And if all certain knowledge he would find,
As into ocean rivulets discharge,
And thus to meteless bounds their own enlarge,
So with all earth-things he must leave behind
His finite scope—whate'er of his own kind
Or personal bounds be laid to human charge.

His Reason must be lost and mergèd quite,
A part of the one great all-reasoning whole ;
Within the bosom of the Infinite ;
Returning to its home, its parent soul.
Thus, conscious or half-conscious, haply man
Truth in its endless range may somehow scan.

TO PLOTINOS ON HIS DEFINITION
OF REVELATION.

Διὸ καὶ λέγεται ὀρθῶς, τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ καλὸν τὴν ψυχὴν γίνεσθαι ὁμοιωθῆναι εἶναι θεῶ, ὅτι ἐκεῖθεν τὸ κάλδον καὶ ἡ μοῖρα ἢ ἕτερα τῶν ὄντων μᾶλλον δὲ τὰ οὐρα ἢ καλλονὴ ἐστίν, ἢ δε ἕτερα φύσις τὸ αἰσχρον.
—PLOTINOS, *Enneades*, I. vi.

“So ist also für Plotin jedes Schöne schliesslich eine Göttliche Offenbarung, bei deren Anblick das Gemüth zur Ahndung des Göttlichen erhoben, zur Andacht gestimmt werden soll.”—PLOTIN'S *Abhandlung vom Schönen*, von Dr. R. Volkmann, p. 23.

ÆTHEREAL spirit, whose sublime essay,
Greek lore illum'd with a diviner ray,
Closing in sunset glow its radiant day.

As some lone mountain peak that scales the sky,
Fitted to catch the sun's rays beaming high,
And to reflect them longest when they die.

What “Godlike Revelation” is, declare
Transcendent leader of the wise who dare
Scale heaven's own height and find their wisdom there.

Befitting were thy function to define
What heaven's unveiling is men call divine,
In thine thou but reflectest heaven's sunshine.

No lettered volume could exhaust thy view
Of "Godlike Revelation," howe'er true,
Not less than *all* heaven's lore its rend'ring due.

Nor could some marvellous epoch thee content,
A moment of eternal time soon spent,
Nor Godlike teacher from the high heavens lent.

Nor dogma scheme with mind-enslaving creed,
Fitted ambition's loathsome growths to breed,
Thy Revelation sense could ever feed.

As broad as Nature's unencompassed scope,
Transcending earth and heaven's perceivèd cope,
Far as desire could range on wings of hope.

Whatever Beauty in that boundless reach
Inspired fancy might to mortals teach,
Or Reason's grave authority might preach.

Far as the seer's clear vision can extend,
From earth-born forms to ideal types, and end
Where in like Beauty all fair things do blend.

Whate'er bestirs our reverence when seen,
Whate'er uplifts us to that air serene,
Where Beauty reigns the sole eternal queen.

Revealed Beauty doth the flower disclose,
The dainty lily, or the brilliant rose,
Or humbler bloom that by the wayside blows.

Nor Beauty's tale alone fair flowers tell,
Of grace and modesty they wield the spell,
And sweetness in their tinted cups doth dwell.

Revealing prowess hath the lightning beam,
Riving the sky with brilliant sudden gleam—
A transient glimpse of Nature's might supreme.

Fair sunshine also claims Revealing power
When earth it glorifies with heaven's best dower,
And to new life transmutes the vernal shower.

A like unveiling in bird-music thrills,
When in responsive souls its myriad trills
With sober gladness or with rapture fills.

A Revelation gleams from starlit skies,
Showering down marvels upon human eyes,
And upward lifting souls that tend to rise.

Revealed Beauty own the vernal trees,
Flashing the sunlight, yielding to the breeze
Both song, and motion's myriad harmonies.

Nay, e'en the grass's modest emerald blade,
Half-gold in sunlight, greener in the shade,
For Beauty's Revelation seems well made.

Nor doth man's music, when it stirs man's heart,
In Beauty's chorus lack its own due part,
Nor any beauteous form of human art.

In fine, all Loveliness that lifts man's soul,
Sweetens his joy or mitigates his dole,
Heavenward attracting, as the magnet's pole,
Hath its own part in Revelation's whole.

QUOTATIONS AND COMMENTS (VI).
THE HOME OF HUMAN SOULS (I).

AFTER PORPHYRY AND WORDSWORTH.

Quotation.

“PORPHYRE dit dans sa *Lettre à Marcella* : ‘ Le meilleur culte qui tu puisses rendre à Dieu c’est de former ton âme à sa ressemblance ; car seule la vertu élève l’âme vers la patrie d’où elle est issue.’ ” *

“ Hence in a season of calm weather,
 Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
 Which brought us hither,
 Can in a moment travel thither
And see the children sport upon the shore
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.” †

Comment.

Once musing, for the hundredth time,
O bard, upon thy ode sublime,
Pure blend of sage’s thought with poet’s rhyme,

* “ Bouillet les *Ennéades* de Plotin,” I. p. lii.

† Wordsworth, “ Ode on Immortality.”

And deathless as its theme of Immortality,
 Methought, though dwelling far inland,
 I would betake me to the strand
 Which bounds that vast immortal sea,
 And closer scan than e'er before .
 The children sport upon the shore
 And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

So, sped from wakedness to sleep,
 I fell into a slumber deep,
 The while my musings did their course continuous keep.

* * * * *

Methought I drew towards the shore,
 And heard commingled with the murm'rous roar
 Of the immortal ocean's roll,
 Attuned to one harmonious whole,
 The merriment of children as at play,
 The joyous laughter of an infant soul
 Ere yet the dead'ning, dark'ning dole
 Of human birth
 Had quelled its heaven-born mirth—
 The shrill mad laugh of fairy, sprite, or fay
 Whose very spirit-nature makes it gay.

Just landed were they in the dawn's first gleam,
 From tiny skiffs whereof the placid sea
 Did multitudinously teem ;
 Nor sooner landed than their rapturous glee,
 As if bestirrèd by the novel sight
 Of the new earth-sun's light
 Burst forth in spirit descants wild and free.

Advancing further on the golden sands,
I stood amid those wingèd infant bands,
 At which revived sight
My memory inbreathed heaven-fresh delight ;
The intervening years were swept away,
As by a magic wand, and once again the day
When my infantile consciousness first came to being,
And my new-opened eyes began their seeing,
Ere questioning awe and wonderment possessed
My soul, nor even now laid all to rest—
 When my new life, though strange
 With new-born powers and range,
Retained its prior being's mirth and gladness,
Not yet subdued by earth-engendered sadness.

Then also pressed, with force anew,
Those hints mysterious, as I older grew
(Through gradual earth-engrossment they were few),
Of some fair world, whose dim-worn memory
Like flashes of an ill-remembered dream,
Or as the shadowy outlines of the land doth seem
To out-bound vessels far upon the sea ;
Vague hintings of some joy I once possessed,
Womb-pulses of a thought not come to being,
Suggestions of a feeling unexpressed,
Dim tracings of fair sights now long past seeing—
The momentary flashes which uplift
 As in a thunderstorm at night
Our mental gloom, but being unearthly bright,
Leave us but more uncertainty and fright—

These chance sporadic impulses of soul
Which rive in twain its earth-begotten whole,
And make unreal its meaning and its goal,
Were all explained now I had reached the strand
Washed by the sea that parts it from the land
 Of its remote nativity,
Celestial source of its dispersed activity.

It served all Virtue's promptings to explain,
Now that I skirted the unmeasured main
Bounding the realm where Virtue hath her reign.

Strong impulses to Truth now found their source,
When I discerned their home and earthward course ;
Now might I realize, too, their heaven-born force.

The Sense of Beauty could seem strange no more,
Seeing that I actually paced the shore
Whose sea its living freights had hither bore.

Men's chance-born yearning for diviner things
Stood self-revealed in those light airy wings
Of souls new-born, ere earth-dust to them clings.

Then said I to these children shy,
Whose laughter ceased when I drew nigh,
While downward fell each lustrous eye,
" I pray you, dear ones, tell to me
The secret of your childish glee.
Strange am I now to this fair strand,
Though I might visit it so readily,

My home is now, ah ! far inland,
Yet once like you I sported on these sands,
Toying, like you, and joining hands,
A spritely unit of like spritely hands."

They answered, " We are full of glee,
Since fresh as yet is the glad memory
Of our far spirit-home,
Whence hither we have come
Crossing the surface of yon murm'ring sea.
More joyous, too, are we,
Lest stranded on this earth
And sharing human birth
May haply dissipate in part our mirth.
So blithe are we, now we have season so to be,
And have besides sufficing reason for our glee."

" What that fair reason is I pray you tell,"
Said I ; " for though I once knew well,
Yet is my memory now grown somewhat dim."

Then, smiling, said they, " Come,
That we with spirit-mirth may gladden him,
Sing we the joyous hymn
Of our far spirit-home."

Then, joining hands,
They made a circle on the golden sands ;
And then with measured step and sprightly dance,
Which did the mirthful melody enhance
With rhythmic sway and swing
Thus did they sing :—

“ Our spirit-home is across the sea,
Whence we have voyaged, laden with glee,
The earth-mates of men for a season to be.

“ Unladen as yet, our cargoes of joy
Thriftyly make we their future employ
To purify men from earth-ill, and alloy.

“ Clearly as yet in sweet memory’s shrine
We foster home-love and remembrance divine,
And thus for itself we delay to pine.

“ Our home is the birth-place of Beauty fair,
Which beautifies all things lovely and rare,
And this we desire to make men share.

“ Our home is Truth’s native e’er-dwelling place,
Where itself it unveils in immortal grace ;
Our task is to sow it among man’s race.

“ Virtue there holds omnipotent sway,
Giving light and warmth as the morn sun’s ray ;
Both makes and enlivens earth’s everyest day.

“ Goodness reigns there, in her sphere supreme,
Compared with her lustre—we can but deem
Her reflection on earth scarce more than a dream.

“ All growths that are lovely and good and true,
There are native and old, though here they be new ;
To teach them to men is our function due.

“Such is our home, and right glad are we,
 Denizens of such a home to be,
 And we mean to return o’er yon æther sea,
 When once from earth-servitude we are free.”

* * * * *

So weird was their song, full of strange glamourye,
 Its rhythm and dance by the murmuring sea.
 I was mastered as if some potent spell,
 My being’s bewitchment by force did compel ;
 Of memory I was almost bereft,
 And even self-consciousness scarcely was left.

Earth’s alien intuitions, strange and rare,
 Continuous now, seemed natural and fair ;
 Vague yearnings that within me burned,
 Their origin obscure and undiscerned,
 All realized now in a supreme totality,
 Ravished all sense of earth and earth-mortality.

The transient glimpses of a dream once bright,
 Faint fitful flashes of a far-off light,
 Concurred in one resplendent glory to unite ;
 As if heaven’s light, refracted by earth’s prism,
 Again had coalesced its seven-fold schism
 Into its primal ray of purest white.

* * * * *

Unable my new ardour to restrain,
 To join their dance and song I was full fain ;
 My voice uplifted for their witching chants,
 My feet prepared to tread their rhythmic dance :
 Of all my self-control the limits broke,
 But moving, I aroused me, so awoke.

THE HOME OF HUMAN SOULS (II).

(PARTLY) AFTER PLOTINOS.

“Φεύγωμεν δὴ φίλην ἐς πατρίδα, ἀληθέστερον ἂν τις παρακλέουιτο
. . . Πατρίς δὲ ἡμῶν ὅθεν παρήλθομεν, καὶ πατήρ ἐκεῖ.”—*Epinæades*, I.
vi. 8.

COMPOUNDED is man's life of what seems real,
And what doth merely seem
On true appeal
The shadowy semblance of a restless dream.

So musing on Plotinos and his lore,
I found myself, as once before,
Lapp'd in a dream wherein
Fancy's ideal feignings stirr'd within,
Assumed as heretofore an outward guise,
As of real things discerned by bodily eyes.

Again I stood upon the deathless shore
Where breaks the sea that rolls for evermore,
But not upon those very sands
Where I saw children dance with joinèd hands ;
It was, I ween, a different part
In fancy's subtle demarcation,
Where souls, their earth work done, were wont to start
Upon their homeward embarcation.

They came, I saw, in countless shoals,
These eager, heaven-returning souls,
And yet not all returned to the golden sands,
Or launched their skiffs upon the murm'ring sea ;
For not a few among their heaven-born bands
Had suffered shipwreck fatally,
Nor e'er again might see the shore
Or ripple, each with wand-like oar.
The crystal sea whose waves roll evermore.

Ah ! great as was the glee
Of those just landed from th' immortal sea,
More rapturous still and unrestrained
Their joy who after weary travailing had gained
The well-remembered strand
To which their skiffs long years before first came to land.
But chiefly when beneath the wave
Hastily they did them lave
That to their joy full vent they gave.

For painful was it to remark
The contrast, nigh as light and dark,
Between the full unsullied glee
Of those just landed from the sea
And their wan look and aspect worn
Who earth-life burdens long had borne.

Nay, some were pitiful to view,
So wrinkled were they and so stained,
That scarce their heaven identity remained
Until their lavement due
Did all their primal traits renew.

One such I ventured to accost,
Of mien dejected and lack-lustrous eye,
His vacant look seemed to imply
That more than most it had been tost
On the tempestuous wave of human life :
“ I prythee, spirit,” said I, “ tell,
What more than common ill hath thee befel
In thy comminglement with earth-born strife,
So wan thou seemest, and stained with human ill.”
Whereon it hasted thus to do my will.

“ Alas ! my life on this weary earth,
Almost from the day of my human birth,
As a record of good is of scantiest worth.

“ Joined to a being whose nature vile
Every possible vice combined to defile,
While all was masked by profoundest guile,

“ My native impulses, though heaven born,
By my earthly mate were held in scorn ;
All traits of my birth became almost out-worn.

“ My promptings to virtue and goodness and truth,
Were blunted and deafened in early youth,
To my mingled horror and anger and ruth.

“ Had his life dured long I must have died,
All losing the nature that heaven supplied,
And stained, beyond cleansing of yonder tide.

“ But haply for me his vicious course,
Headlong and lacking both stay and remorse,
Ceased ere I lost all my heaven-born force.”

So spake the wan and weary spirit,
 Wailing the ill incurr'd,
 The fair page stained and blurr'd,
Which erst from heaven it did inherit.

And of the others, most bare dents and stains
Of earthly trials and vices and pains ;
Their wrinkled faces, deep-sunken eyes,
Frames stunted to half their normal size,
Almost it seemed they aimed to disguise
Their lineage of heaven and spirit birth,
Beneath the sordid investures of earth.

But no sooner laved in the deathless sea,
Than from earth defilements at once they were free,
Whereupon burst more gladly their former glee.

They sang and dancèd, joining eager hands
 In merry circle weaving bands.
 And therewith beat with lively feet,
Their rhythmic measures on the golden sands.

Then took each his skiff as it lay on the shore,
And down to the sea they hasted once more,
And as they launched forth they lifted their voices,
As he who in a transport of gladness rejoices,
In a unison tuneful and mellow and strong,
 They sang with rapture this spirit-song—

“ Let us flee, let us flee, to our own dear land,
Putting forth merrily from this ancient strand ;
Our tasks are achieved, and all sated with earth,
We return well relieved to the land of our birth.

“ Let us flee, let us flee, to our own dear land,
We obey willingly our dear Father’s command ;
We have done His behest, and our earth-travail o’er,
We return to His rest and His home evermore.

“ Joyfully let us flee to our own dear land,
Giving vent full and free to our Nature’s demand ;
Our yearnings on earth now at last find peace,
Our plaintive unmirth in heaven’s rapture will cease.

“ In our skiffs let us flee to our own dear land,
Each his path o’er the sea by his mystic wand
Urging straight course and true for yon home of rest,
Where abide ever new all things fairest and best.

“ Let us flee, let us flee, to our own dear land,
Borne have we patiently earth’s corroding brand ;
Though its stain rife with pain we have washed away,
We its mem’ry retain, though we shall not alway.

“ Hurriedly let us flee to our far-off land,
Yearningly as we be, all a home-eager band ;
On earth’s alien coast we have long since pined—
Ah, how gladly we boast, all its woes are behind.

As we flee o’er the sea, dimly looms earth’s light,
Many leagues row must we ere heaven bless our sight ;
But our skiffs are fleet and short seems the way,
When its course we mete from night towards day.”

Such was their song, each oarsman of the band
His skiff propelling with his mystic wand
 In rhythmic unison with all the rest ;
Attuned each movement to the joyous strain,
As forth they launched hurrying to regain
 Their primal native home among the blest.

Nor did their oar-wands wielded with such grace,
Each beat increasing with increasing pace,
Make scarce a wrinkle on the crystal face
 Of the immortal main.

But as a bird-wing dimples the glazed pool,
Or the last indent of the sculptor's tool
Scarcely impinges the smooth marble grain,
So the light-ruffled sea was crystal smooth again.

Thus fainter grew their song upon the sea,
 The while, inblent with the soft murm'rous roar,
 Of placid wavelets lapping soft the shore
 In interfused harmony,
Until by distance silenced, its melodious glee
 I heard no more.

* * * * *

Meanwhile was putting forth another fleet,
And ever new arose the self-same strain ;
But, as its melody induced pain
 To souls still chafing in earth's chain,
I now was minded to withdraw my stranger feet,
And, effort making, the dim phantasy broke
And I, or ere I knew the manner how, awoke.

QUOTATIONS AND COMMENTS (VII.).

LIFE AND LOVE.

Quotations.

“FOR life with all it yields of joy or woe,
And hope and fear,
Is just our chance o’ th’ prize of learning love.” *

“On est souvent trompé en amour, souvent blessé et souvent malheureux? mais on aimé, et quand on est sur la bordure de sa tombe on se retourner pour regarder en arrière, et on se dit : J’ai souffert souvent, je me sens trompé quelquefois, mais j’ai aimé.” †

“Du Heilige, rufe dein kind zurück,
Ich habe genossen das irdische glück
Ich habe gelebt und geliebet.” ‡

“’Tis better to have loved and lost,
Than never to have loved at all.” §

* * * * *

Browning. † A. de Musset. ‡ Schiller. § Tennyson.

Comment.

Thus, poets, do ye all agree,
In sweet consentient unity,
As though 'twere given from above,
That Love is Life, and Life is Love.

Pure language of the feelings, who
Would dare to deem your thought untrue ?
And yet perchance 'twere hard to prove
Love is but Life, and Life is Love.

A prize is dear though nobly bought,
When in its winning death is wrought ;
The world were gained at too great cost,
If by its purchase Life were lost.

Life's fairest prize is Love to learn,
If Love give Life its joys to earn,
And yet were neither "treasure trove,"
If Love kill Life, or Life kill Love.

'Tis hard to mete what yet remains
To mem'ry of Love's golden gains,
Harder to mete with it the throe,
Its present sense of loss and woe.

For Love and Life are oft so blent,
We cannot mark each weird content ;
How large in bulk and how intense
Are veiled in nescience dark and dense.

To answer full the poet's lay :—
That Love its loss doth far outweigh ;
We first should know, in strict account,
Of Love and loss the full amount.

A loveless life were but a waste,
By arid barrenness defaced ;
But wasted is man's life scarce less,
Death blasted to a wilderness.

And so the Life once graced with Love,
Though other lives we rank above,
Yet less than other lives may be,
If crushed by cruel destiny.

Go, whisper the poor suicide,
About to bury 'neath the tide
The smart of love betrayed and lost,
“Worse were her fate by Love uncrossed.”

Or tell the broken-hearted mate,
Less dire were the woeful fate,
That yields his sole life's joy to death,
Than if it ne'er had taken breath.

Better, maybe, *to some chance one*,
Love won and lost, than Love unwon ;
But only when the Love survives
The loss death wrings from human lives.

For tend'rest natures Love fills Life,
Fulness of joy, with splendour rife ;
And Love being taken Life is left,
A casket of its gem bereft.

And if the casket, memory stored
With trace of its once precious hoard,
The fragrance of a balm unseen,
Whisp'ring, "Here sweetness once hath been,"

Yet such dim memories but bring
Thoughts which the heart with anguish wring,
The gem despoiled, the casket's worth
Is but to tell its value's dearth.

The summer evening's after glow—
Long glim'ring, though the sun bestow
No more its orb to human sight—
But leaves men wrapp'd in shades of night.

So shivering men, their sun gone down,
Moan, when they pass the night alone,
"With dark and cold we'd not been wroth,
Had not the sun screen'd from us both."

No after-consciousness of gain
Can quit Love's loss, or soothe its pain,
When *all* is staked and *all* is lost,
Too wrung are men to count the cost.

THE WINGS OF HOPE.

In life's blithe spring, when Hope was young,
The child was wanton and laughed and sung ;
His wings untried were his boyish pride,
As he fondly eyed where they gracefully sprung.

He oped and refolded them early and late,
In their beauty and gloss his delight was great ;
His pinions were long, close feathered and strong,
They well might belong to an eagle's mate.

“ Oho ! ” quoth Hope, “ these pinions of mine
To easy ascent are a promptful sign ;
My mission is found, I must spurn the ground,
And far upward bound to yon stars that shine.

So after due trial he purposed to fly,
He shook his wings, spread them, and mounted high ;
So easy their flight, or his form was light,
He was soon out of sight in the clear blue sky.

But no less speedy was Hope's descent,
He could not soar to the height he meant ;
So stagnant the air, so chill and rare,
Not all he could dare could achieve his intent.

Foiled and dismayed, Hope fell to the ground,
Though his airy frame no great injury found ;
Nor his earthward rush, though it made him blush,
Could his buoyancy crush or prevent his rebound.

Again he arose on his soaring wings,
Like the lark in the dawn that mounts and sings ;
To scale he was fain, far-off summits and gain,
And thereafter retain, aerial things.

But times without count, how oft none could tell,
From his loftiest mountings abruptly he fell ;
But though they grew sore, his wings patient bore
Their falls, and e'er more new ascents did impel.

With lengthening life Hope older grew,
His wings remained buoyant but ceased to be new ;
Yet his instincts retained their old ardour, and gained,
O'er his strength that remained goodly triumphs not few.

But lesser and less were th' ascents he essayed,
His wings became quilly and draggled and frayed ;
Now also his flight was no longer light,
But of such drawbacks spite, new efforts he made.

At last by mournful experience taught,
For loftiest aims more rarely he sought,
His ascents became all more airily small,
And whence a chance fall would signify naught.

How piteous in age to behold Hope's wings,
Hang drearily down with the droop age brings,
Their plumage bare-worn, quills bruised and torn
They seemed the forlornest of feathered things.

Then Hope that embodied in life's young day
Glad buoyancy, now was dull, withered, and grey,
His mien dejected, his life-aims wrecked,
No one now could detect his young ardour gay.

Last of all, in late age Hope sadly furled
Worn wings that to earth had so oft been hurled ;
But even now Hope, seeking loftier scope,
New wings yearns to ope in a future world.

QUOTATIONS AND COMMENTS (VIII.):

THE ETERNITY OF TRUTH.

Quotation.

“ERIT igitur Veritas, etiamsi mundus intereat.”*

Comment.

The world is passing, cease your quest
For Truth ; what boots the vain unrest
Which seeks but fails to find its best ?

The world is dying : to what end
Beyond its bounds persistent tend,
Or with its realness fiction blend ?

The world is perishing : what use
Its mundane pleasure to refuse,
Or on vain ideal joys to muse ?

* * * * *

So rings the loud despairing cry,
Filling the world with clamour high,
Who will may echo : but not I.

* Augustine, “Solil.,” II. ch. ii.

For if it be so, then, what next ?
Must we admit our souls are vex'd
By sequent reasoning from such text ?

Whatever fate our world befall,
Destroyed by forces that appal
With their consuming sweep of all.

Whatever happen to earth-time,
Man's record long of greed and crime,
Scantly relieved by deeds sublime.

Though in oblivion's Lethean stream,
Earth-products men most lasting deem
Be gulfed—forgotten as a dream.

Though all the suns and stars through space,
Held in infinity's embrace
Perish, nor leave the smallest trace,

Yet Truth its changeless being retains,
And as ideal queen still reigns,
Though of earth realness nought remains.

The *Truth* of word and deed to-day,
That in man's life and thought bears sway,
Can never *truly* pass away.

Without abatement, change, or flaw,
Defiant of death's ravenous maw,
Truth to Eternity gives law.

Nay more, essential Being, its soul
Makes vital all creation's whole,
And e'en to God gives birth and goal.

*THE SONG OF THE EURIPIDEAN
DEITIES.*

Φύρουσι δ' αὐτὰ θεοὶ πάλιν τε καὶ πρόσω
Ταραγμὸν ἐντιθέντες, ὡς ἀγνωσία
Σέβωμεν αὐτούς. . . .

Euripides, "Hecuba," 944.

" HITHER and thither, despising men's grumble,
Upward and down, a promiscuous jumble,
Human fates unconcernèd we tumble ;
Human sorrows, and hopes, and joys,
Are our chosen Olympian toys.
These we commingle in direst confusion,
Weaving our spell of men's illusion,
Mocking their sense of security,
Wrecking their hopes of futurity.
Their questing lips we lock with a muzzle,
Their destinies all we transmute to a puzzle.
No other conclusion we leave them free,
Than that life is a hopeless uncertainty.

* * * * *

" And this is why we confuse in a tangle
Men's lots, and their hopes we love to mangle ;
That driven by knowledge destitution,
By failure of finding a sure solution

For life's enigma—poor mortals may crowd
Our shrines, and offer us praises loud.
Our aid capricious may ever invoke,
And with victims cause our altars to smoke.”

* * * * *

Agnostics, ye who *αγνοσια* take,
And your sole life-principle choose to make,
At least its logical outcome learn,
Nor on that account deity-worship spurn,
’Tis *Certainty*, not its measureless dearth
That rightly dares banish the gods from earth.

*ON MATTHEW ARNOLD'S DEFINITION
OF DEITY — "SOMETHING THAT
MAKES FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS."*

As a child launches on the running stream
His paper skiff, nor knows its destined goal,
But chiefly the direction that it takes,
Dim-trusting it may crest the ocean-wave ;

Or blows upon the breeze the filmy orb,
Prismatic hued, that issues from his pipe,
Unwitting where it flies or how it falls,
But hoping it will sail "above the house,"

So on the stream of tendency whose course
Still makes for Righteousness, men cast
Their sighs and prayers and eager efforts meet.

* * * * *

And is it not enough that men should know
The aim and tendency of the Divine ?
That they should share the power and will to join
Their hopes and efforts to the stream of Right,
Unknown the ocean where its course doth cease ?

But what if, one may interpose, the stream
Find not its fitting ocean-bourne of Right ;
But, its course losing, 'mid time's desert sands
Dispersed, there come to an untimely end ?
Would then man's skiff, laden with dearest hopes.
Upon a stream that lacks its outflow due,
Be wisely launched ?

To which I answer thus :

“ The child knows only how the stream doth tend,
Nor *know* men more than the mere course of Right—
The main and ampler current as it moves,
Marked from all backward eddies' transient flow—
Nor more is needed. Howe'er its course may end,
Cannot affect its present Right-ward drift,
Nor yet the noble truth annul :—What Right
Is now, must Right remain for evermore.”

IS LIFE WORTH LIVING?

A QUERY SOLVED BY QUESTIONS.

Is life worth living,
That gift of Heaven's giving,
Is it worth man's receiving?

Is life's conflict worth daring,
Or the vigour worth sharing,
That comes from its bearing?

Is joy worth possessing,
Maugre all its confessing,
'Tis not always a blessing?

Is love worth acquiring,
Man's selfishness firing,
With noblest aspiring?

Is Nature worth wooing,
Are her beauties worth viewing,
Or her secrets pursuing?

Is spring worth enjoying,
Or summer deploying,
Her sweets without cloying ?

Is art worth the culture,
Music, painting, and sculpture,
Do all merit sepulture ?

Are good books worth reading,
Whence both "light and leading,"
Are ever proceeding ?

Is thought worth the spending,
On themes without ending,
Past man's apprehending ?

Is Truth worth the questing,
Without pausing or resting,
Man's efforts all besting ?

Is good work worth doing,
Are ill deeds worth rueing,
Is peace worth ensuing ?

And

Are questions worth asking,
Man's wit vainly tasking,
And true issues masking ?

*ON THE DEATH OF A YOUNG AND
ONLY CHILD.*

REST, happy child,
In the soft embrace of thy Saviour mild.
The world thou leav'st is stormy, harsh, and wild,
By sin beguiled,

Thy time was brief,
Just long enough love's ties and sweet belief
To bind up with our hearts, as in one sheaf,
Rent—to our grief.

Little we think,
Who worship weeping round thy small grave's brink,
How much the more life's full cup thou wouldst shrink
Mayhap to drink.

Enough for taste
Of love and play and sickness—and for waste,
Since tired of all—knowing thyself misplaced,
Hence thou didst haste.

Our hearts are sore,
Since death hath riven from their inmost core
A vital part. How full love's life before
Now know we more.

As a ray lent
From fairer worlds, with kindest intent,
To add fresh lustre to our lives' content,
Being with them blent.

Now are they dim,
As when bright Hesper sinks beneath the rim
Of the horizon, and men's eyes o'erbrim
With darkness grim.

Life is more scant
Of human treasure, and more rich in want,
Now that thy presence gilds no more the haunt
Which did it vaunt.

Life's varied ill,
The greed and falsehood which our world doth fill,
Reft of thy innocence and self-less will,
Seem drearier still.

More loud its roar
Of clamorous un wisdom than before,
Unhush'd by thy voice-music that o'erbores
It—heard no more.

E'en Nature's voice,
Conveying calm, or bidding us rejoice,
Seems now, that silenced are thy accents choice,
Discordant noise.

We cannot tell
In what sweet home of innocence thou dost dwell ;
That heaven were rendered heavenlier by thy spell
We know full well.

And so we mourn,
Our earthly life of heavenly grace so shorn,
While deeper grieve we that from that far bourne
Is no return.

And yet more bright
Seems death's dark realm to our blind wond'ring sight
Now thou hast, by thy presence, changed to light
Its fatal night.

Dear child, farewell,
What thou hast been to us we cannot tell ;
We know but this—our happiness in thy funeral bell
Hath its own knell.

QUOTATIONS AND COMMENTS (IX.).

HUMAN PLANS v. HUMAN ISSUES.

Quotation.

Ἐχθίστη δὲ ὀδύνη ἐστὶ τῶν ἐν ἀνθρώποισι αὐτή, πολλὰ
φρονέοντα μηδενὸς κρατεῖν.*

Comment.

OF all lots the fates ordain,
Falls to man no direr pain
Than the helpless pangs that ever
Human thought and issue sever.

Many schemings, scant success,
So men wail the bootlessness
Of long efforts ; nought availing
To secure their own prevailing.

Life with myriad plans we fill,
On them spending thought and skill,
But of these no man is master,
To preserve from wreck's disaster.

* "Herodotus, ix. 16.

Thought explores the world around,
Its hard problems that abound,
With no certainty of gaining,
Truth it deems most worth attaining.

Knowledge fair with sweetest smile,
Doth man's intellect beguile,
Much he guesses—but is certain,
But of Nescience's dark curtain

Spread before Truth's inner shrine,
Shadowing its light divine ;
As the temple veil screen'd duly,
Holiest things from gaze unruly.

Fancy spreads her buoyant wings,
Scales the loftiest heights—but brings
As her labours realized earnings,
Little sating of man's yearnings.

Hopes beguile us by their glamour,
Claim us with imperious clamour,
And when well possessed they leave us,
To a disillusion grievous.

Yet may not men's doubt-pang keen,
Thought and issue thrust between,
Be a wholesome hunger pressing,
To fresh efforts rife with blessing ?

Since to search, design, or plan,
Is the highest end of man,
And the mastery we covet,
Doth but rarely rise above it.

No ! we leave to destiny,
Trusting where we cannot see,
All results our future moving,
Thinking, planning, hoping, loving.

SEARCH AND MARVEL.

“Then answered he me, and said, The more thou searchest, the more thou shalt marvel.”—2 Esdras iv. 26.

I. SUBJECTIVE.

“SEARCH is the fruitful seed of Wonderment,”
So mused the unknown Jewish seer of old,
And Wonderment that is not dead and cold
Impels again to Search and un-content.

Each to the other lends its stir and bent,
While both, as in a two-armed embrace, hold
Man’s mind-life in their eager, kindling fold,
Unsating food with sateless hunger blent.

The growing Marvel of the thinker’s thought,
At last absorbs his world without, within,
Till outside of that Wonder there is nought
But what increase of Wonderment doth win ;
Thus Search finds Truth, sole object of its cares,
Man’s Wonder being the guise his Truth oft wears.

II. OBJECTIVE.

Passed many centuries since those words were new,
And ever since hath Search enlarged her scope
O’er earth’s broad vistas and heaven’s boundless cope ;
Now more than ever is their import true.

Since Search with Wonder as its sequence due,
Expending ampler means, more daring hope,—
As he who climbs some lofty Alpine slope,—
Marks every upward step with vaster view.

Thus Search for further Search finds ever room,
And Wonder growing feeds new Wonder's sense,
Both finding in earth's narrow twilight gloom,
Their bent and aptitude for heaven's immense.
For Search and Wonder both, if read aright,
Disclose man's kinship with the Infinite.

FUTURE LIFE.

A REVERIE AND AN EXPERIMENT.

SHALL we remember in the life beyond
The deed- and word-wove life we led on earth ?
Will memory with echo clear respond
For ever to each impress of her birth ?

Our conscious life is but continuous thought,
Joined link to link in mem'ry's spirit-chain ;
Whose ties, once sundered, conscious life is nought,
And death and nothingness alone remain.

Whate'er our future life may claim to be,
It's earlier stage is still our life of earth ;
And howsoe'er we mete eternity,
Man's conscious life-date must begin at birth.

The life beyond we cannot hence conceive,
But as prolonging our existence here,
Eternity's sole being we must believe,
Is Time's extension to another sphere.

But who would live again and find it joy
To re-peruse for e'er the blotted page,
Life's chequered scroll of gladness and annoy,
Man's motley wear of fool, and knave, and sage.

Some Lethean stream seems needed to efface
Life's darker stains, its failures, and its woes ;
Some mode by which its course one might retrace,
With the full light experience gives its close.

Thus musing, I resolved by actual quest,
Among my friends this truth to ascertain :
If men for future life real love professed,
Then, willing, would they live earth's life again.

So one I asked, of lengthening years a friend,
If she her life again would choose to live.
" Ah, no ! " came ready answer, " Heaven forefend.
On no condition Heaven itself could give.

" You might as well, when shipwrecked men have won
A shelter from the rav'ning sea, demand
That they again should try the course nigh run,
From whose dire perils they are nearing land."

So queried I of others. Almost all,
With equal earnestness like answer gave ;
Few cared again their past life to recall,
Fresh starting from the cradle towards the grave.

But though thus minded most, a few preferred
Replies of import diff'ring from the rest ;
By oriental mysticism stirr'd,
One held forgetfulness alone were blest.

" Sweet nothingness," said he, " to me doth seem
The goal towards which all human hopes respond ;
What is life's memory that men should deem
It worth preserving through the æons beyond ? "

Another said, "Oblivion need not be
Man's fate, though memory of earth-life cease ;
A rain-drop falling in the boundless sea,
By loss of self, gains infinite increase.

That Being exists, apart from personal bounds
Of human memory and consciousness,
Proves the vast universe which each surrounds,
The myriad life its myriad parts possess."

Another said,—His life had happier been,
Than mostly falls to man his earthly lot—
"The days, with some exception, I have seen,
Their light rekindled, I should murmur not.

"For time e'er wields a spell of magic rare,
By which the bitter dregs of life's mixed cup
Are filtered to oblivion, leaving clear
It's sparkling draught which memory sips up."

And yet one more, whose life was wholly given
To knowledge pursuits and Truth's holy quest,
He said, "Would God I might re-live in heaven,
With added light, the life of earth's unrest.

"For with all knowledge there is effort blent,
Each with the other interchanging bliss ;
Heaven-life could yield no more divine content
Than Truth-search earnestly begun in this

"With ampler means, new superhuman powers,
To all domains of knowledge to extend,
Thus might God give, noblest of godlike dowers,
Scope for Truth-energizing without end."

But these dim guesses unresolved still left
My first plain issue—in the life to be
Will conscious life continue whole or cleft
In mode mysterious, for eternity ?

For if true instinct guide those who respond,
Refusing to re-live their life of earth,
Haply we may, in the dim realms beyond,
Forget the life begun with human birth.

QUOTATIONS AND COMMENTS (X.).

LIFE AND DEATH.

Quotation.

Τὶς οἶδεν εἰ τὸ ζῆν μὲν ἔστι καθανεῖν
Τὸ καθανεῖν δὲ ζῆν.*

Comment.

AN Life be Death and Death be Life,
How best to name the peace and strife
Alternate in man's lot and rife,
Who knows ?

For names, though but dead signs of things,—
As perfume to the rose leaf clings—
The subtler meaning that each brings,
Who knows ?

We speak of Life, unwitting quite
Its mystery to discern aright
And what Death is, in its dread might,
Who knows ?

Life is but Death in many a stage,
From earliest childhood to old age ;
Death may but turn one more like page,
Who knows ?

* Greek Proverb.

We die to childhood, then to youth,
To passions, pleasures, views of truth,
All deaths alike may be in sooth,
Who knows ?

Our Life a waking time we deem,
And think of Death as some dark dream ;
Truth all reversed this yet may seem,
Who knows ?

We must believe that they least live,
Who to life-change their souls most give ;
Death's stroke they oftenest receive,
One knows.

While he, the true self-centred soul,
Who Life and Death counts but one whole,
Nought recks of starting-point or goal,
One knows.

His Life above all changes led,
Above all Death is well bestead,
Thus may live on when he is dead,
Who knows ?

ODE TO SERENITY.

OUR wild mad world thou hast forsaken,
To some quiet haunt thyself betaken ;
At least, here thou art no more seen,
O sweet Serene.

Loathing, no doubt, men's sordid life,
Its bustling warfare, wordy strife,
Its restless rivalry, low and mean,
O sweet Serene.

Its cold contempt for gentle quiet,
Its endless, unrestrained riot,
Its grasping greed all eager keen,
O sweet Serene.

Small marvel thou our world hast left,
And thy few children, thus bereft,
Thy absence wail from scenes terrene,
O sweet Serene.

As when the dove from out the ark
Surveyed the waters cold and dark,
With no dry spot nor leaf of green,
O sweet Serene,

Hurried with all her wingèd zest,
Back to her former home of rest,
So thou art fled to realms unseen,
O sweet Serene.

For thee Heaven's dearest love distilled,
And with sweet calm the world had filled,
Thine own realm's founder Christ had been,
O sweet Serene,

Had not men's selfish greed and noise,
Uplifting high their blatant voice,
Thy gentler teachings come between,
O sweet Serene.

Now e'en the church, due home of peace,
Fill with their uproar, nor surcease
Pride, greed, ambition, beasts unclean,
O sweet Serene.

And Christian nations by church taught,
With like foul passions are o'erwrought,
While thou and thine forgot are clean,
O sweet Serene.

Infested is our family life
By greed and selfishness and strife,
'Tween men and thee they form a screen,
O sweet Serene.

Children, as soon as they can learn,
Are taught thy placid gifts to spurn,
On worldliness their souls to lean,
O sweet Serene.

Ambition, grandeur, wealth, and pride,
Far higher deemed than aught beside,
Serve well men's souls from thee to wean,
O sweet Serene.

Wonder we dare not, though we mourn
That thou hast left our earthly bourne,
Banished by turmoil, anger, spleen,
O sweet Serene.

Prythee reveal to me thy home,
Where noise, disquiet, never come,
Fain would I quit this bustling scene,
O sweet Serene.

HUMAN TIES.

FATEFUL are ye, human ties,
Whence your thraldoms, why they rise
We know not ; nay, cannot guess
The source of your imperious stress.

Fair are ye, O human ties,
To poor yearning human eyes,
Longing for some twisted strand
Which may join unto firm land

Their frail craft upon life's sea
Tossing ever restlessly,
Little boding of their state
Should it sunder by harsh fate.

Masterful, poor men ye bind,
Senseless rendering them or blind,
Slaves of alien aim or will,
Self-effacement to fulfil.

Changeful are ye, human ties
As the showery April skies,
Alternating storm and sun,
Rarely ending as begun.

Guileful are ye, human ties,
When your weakness real belies
The pretended strength ye boast,
Weakness proved at mournful cost.

Dreadful are ye, human ties,
When of heart-strings ye devise
Fatal chains of life which may
By their sudden snapping, slay.

Ay, or what were fate far worse,
Drag through life the cold dead corpse
Of the sundered heart—with pain
'Ware that dead it must remain.

Sweet are ye, O human ties,
When your strength combined supplies
Joy of life and weal and love,
Making life with music move.

Though, alas! the closer plied,
Love's gold chains and links are tied,
Greater anguish do they bring
At death's final sundering.

Thus ye are nets, O human ties,
Though oft hid by seemlier guise,
Lures to men of joy supreme,
Or of woe, no less extreme.

What remains then for the wise,
But, apart from human ties,
Self-contained, with heed to stalk
O'er life's snare-bestrewèd walk.

Unless, buoyed by the hope
Of affections ampler scope,
Tied anew they deem earth-ties
In love's home—above the skies.

WHAT IS FAITH?

FAITH is—not sight,
It boasts not of the sun at noonday bright,
While groping in the starlit haze of night.

—Nor Dogma proud,
Fierce vaunting of all Truth in accents loud,
Beguiling with bold words th' unthinking crowd.

—Nor Science known,
Seated in queenly robes upon her throne,
Meting the boundless with her claspèd zone.

—Nor Certainty,
The overweening claim that Truth must be
What we forecast from what we hear and see.

* * * * *

Faith does but muse
With heed upon the data she *must* use,
Nor likelihood's fair claim durst she refuse.

Faith does but think
That walking on the Infinite's dread brink
She dâre not mete its chain by one small link.

Faith does but feel
That which she deems all dimly, may be real,
On her blind guess she will not set Truth's seal.

Faith doth but hope
She shall see clear—whereas she doth but grope—
When earth's dark vistas widen to heaven's scope.

She doth but will
The healthful impulses she would instil
May by heaven's prospering all good fulfil.

She can but trust
Her wistful craving for the True and Just
Not only *may* be realized, but *must*.

QUOTATIONS AND COMMENTS (XI.),

THE GROAN OF CREATION.

Quotation.

“FOR we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” *

Groan, groan, O earth,
As the mother in throes of birth.
Sea and land and sky,
Join your parturient cry,
In an anguished chorus high.
Creation's limitless round,
Let all your space rebound,
With the wailing echo's sound.
Groan for the pain of your childing strain,
For the present of woe with its vain wistful throe,
For the dawning future ye cannot forego,

* Rom. viii. 22, 23.

Though pregnant with issue ye do not know ;
 For desire ungained, for bliss unattained,
 For labour all wasted, for joyance untasted ;
 For conscious privation, without hope of cessation,
 For the thousand-fold bound that circles you round
 In chains forged of links as of living fire,
 Consuming each hope and intense desire.

* * * * *

First heard in man's furthest reach of time,
 The wail continues to swell
 In mournful cadences, more sublime
 Than human words can tell.
 Its increased sob of passionate sound,
 Is heard through each part of creation's bound,
 In all measures and forms of yearning expression,
 Throughout the whole gamut of non-possession ;
 From the clamorous cry
 To the whispered sigh ;
 From audible groan to stifled moan ;
 From the shriek of anguish intense and acute
 To longings subdued and soft and mute ;
 From all confinèd grades of being
 That from restraint are bent on freeing
 Each earnest struggle and faint desire,
 Each smoking flame and pent-up fire—
 Commencing far below the brute,
 And ranging to heaven's high spheral quire.

* * * * *

Ye myriad orbs of light,
 Gemming heaven's concave by night,

Could we to your glory draw nigh
 We might catch the yearning cry
 (Which long since entranced the attuned ears
 Of rapt heaven-gazing Hellenic seers,
 The "music celestial of the spheres"),
 As if sharing the being and form of earth
 Ye shared no less her throes of birth.
 Your various inflected harmonic strain,
 The voice may be of your child-bearing pain ;
 Each plaintive tone
 May be your groan

For the pitiless forces that bind ye to your courses,
 For each star destination to its own constellation,
 For your failure to trace the dark limits of space,
 For your knowledge close bound to your own orbits round,
 For the limits of laws—the commencement of cause,
 For hindrances ruling without stint or pause,
 For all thwartings that tend with coercive might
 To oppose your strained tension
 Towards ampler extension,
 At least to the fuller comprehension,
 And realizing due of the Infinite.

* * * * *

Creation's groan,
 To sensitive ears is heard in stone,
 In the shifting movements of rock and sand,
 In the warfare perennial of ocean and land ;
 The pent-up forces beneath our world,
 That to fragments its crust have so often hurled ;
 The unknown future that in the womb
 Of our earth as a resurrection-tomb

Is destined to birth, in her day of doom.
 Ah, who can tell the gigantic throes
 With which earth's fiery centre glows,
 Or what in the future such seething bodes
 The thrusts of fierce elemental goads ?

Of your sometime stress
 We may partially guess,
 By the mighty upheaval, eruption, and change
 From the plain to the loftiest mountain range,
 The strain of Chaos primæval to form
 A Kosmos by slow evolution's norm—
 Which our world so abundantly testifies
 Through æons past. Nay, before our eyes
 Volcanoes belch forth their liquid fires ;
 Geysers rush upward to meet the skies ;
 Earthquakes tremble with tense desires.
 The World-Life we call Electricity
 With other Life-Forces, whatever they be,
 All with consentient unity
 Proclaim their infelt creation-sorrow.
 They assert their want
 With resistless pant,
 Which somewhat from violence seems to borrow ;
 They urge their unrest
 With unstaying quest,
 To change their to-day for some hoped to-morrow.

* * * * *

And that all-pervading yearning bent
 Of matter to matter—throughout the content

Of the universe—the mysterious tie
We call in our ignorance “Gravity,”
Which tethers each planet to its sun,
Determines star-distances every one.
Which rules in huge bodies and worlds of space,
And in tiniest atoms that we can trace—
What means this force which everywhere reigns?
But that it expresses the yearning pains,
The resistless love, the absorbing desire,
Which everywhere burns, a quenchless fire ;
For alien conditions, satiety, change,
For sympathy, union, attraction strange
Throughout creation’s infinite range.

* * * * *

But above earth’s surface, more noted and known,
We catch the sad wail of creation’s groan ;
In summer winds that plaintively sigh,
In passionate cries when the gale is high ;
We hear the groan when the ocean waves roar,
Or when more softly they lap the shore.
It sounds in a louder intenser strain,
In the rumble of thunder, the roar of rain ;
It is heard in the musical moan of trees,
When they whisper assent to the wail of the breeze ;
In the rustle of reeds and of harvest corn,
The yearning of night to turn to morn ;
The rush of the brook to join the river,
In liquid cadences surging ever ;
The strain of the river with hurrying motion
To find its repose in the bed of the ocean ;

All motion and struggle whatever there be
 In varying degrees of intensity,
 Whatever the speed
 With which they proceed,
 Or what kind the moan
 With which they groan,
 Mark creation's strain towards Eternity.

* * * * *

And ye, O depths unknown
 Of ocean, do ye not groan?
 Your surges and currents, what do they mean?
 Your tidal ebb and flow,
 Your motion to and fro,
 Your ceaseless, passionate hurrying round
 From side to side of your rocky bound—
 But the wish to o'erflow where no ocean has been;
 The effort to spread
 Beyond the confines of your too narrow bed,
 The desire to be free
 From the servile constraints of mortality?

Or the strain ye attest
 By your wild unrest
 May be longing for objects ye deem the best.
 With the heaven's bright orbs ye sympathize,
 Your waves embosom the star-wealth of the skies.
 To the moon's growing glory ye strive to rise,
 And when her lustre begins to fade
 Ye droop and sink
 From your loftiest brink
 As flowers that pine in a sunless glade.

So do ye for the light
Flashed back from your waves
In myriads of coruscations bright,
For ever aspire for its nearer sight,
For closer approach to its source so white—
Another Endymion with like moon-craves.

Or mean your struggles, ye fiercely rage,
As an untam'd beast in an iron-girt cage?
That hither and thither, from side to side,
Wearily measures with savage stride
The limit extreme that its cage is wide;
Do ye thus pursue, wild streams of ocean,
Your dim-discerned goal by ceaseless motion;
Your voice with your struggle in sympathy,
Ye uplift for ever in myriad key,
Resounding afar from sea to sea?
And this is the common tale they tell,
 In the storm-stirr'd swell,
That tolls so often the sailors' knell;
 In the vehement splash,
When your surges against the wall-cliff dash;
 In the liquid sob
Your gentler waves to the low strand throb,
 In their gurgling moan,
When they echo in caves of resonant stone,
 Or their thud and shock
When in heavier mass they strike the rock.
All accents to one single key-note turn,
All motions for one sole outcome yearn,

The travailing sea, like the travailing earth,
Awaits consummation of her birth.

* * * * *

Ye realms of vegetal being,
Who have life so largely agreeing
With the sentient life of man,
While ofttimes exceeding its transient span,
Trees, plants, and daintiest flowers,
Have ye not amid your dowers,
Ye spend on a world ye render so fair,
An earth that without you were rude and bare,
Cause for the self-same plaint,
The wail for o'er-much constraint,
That with all creation ye share ;
From earth's lowest being to its heavenliest saint?
Your moan is surely heard :—
By thousandfold impulses stir'd,
Yet lacking conditions to grow,
The instincts that urge ye your seed to sow—
Forward gaze to a future ye cannot know,
The plant unrest,
For ever address
To new phases of growth becoming and change,
Through the whole of vegetation's range.
The perpetual strife
For ampler life
With adverse agencies everywhere,
In seed, in soil, and the inclement air.
We hear your groan
In the visual tone
Of stunted growth and misshapen form,

Of flaccid leaf and shrunken flower,
Betraying some hostile plant-killing power,
Fierce heat or drought, or merciless storm,
Or internal deflection from the norm
Of vigorous health in tree or plant,
The wholesome privation of every want.

Your stress we mark with warm sympathy's eyes,
Vain struggles of juices unable to rise,
Efforts of branches forbidden to spread,
Of throng'd trees to bask in the sun overhead,
Keen sensibilities to light,
Thwarted and crushed in abortion's night ;
The aspirings of buds that cannot burst,
From seasons inclement, or hunger and thirst,
The strivings of flowers to burgeon and bloom,
Repressed in cruel obstruction's gloom ;
Sweet infants destined to dire birth-pain,
Or to perish half-quickened within the womb ;
The struggles of colours that cannot attain
The normal richness they're wont to gain ;
The endeavours of perfumes their sweets to diffuse
To the ultimate reach of their fragrance and use ;
The aim of tendrils and roots to expand,
And nurture to draw e'en from arid land.

The myriad struggle, in short, that we see,
Wherever plants and plant-life there be ;
Between their condition by actual fate,
And their ideally possible perfect state,
Part of the creation unwillingly
Subjected to work unfulfillingly,

Yet not debarred from the stirring and hope
Which aspire to other and larger scope.

* * * * *

Ye multiformed animal race,
Inhabiting all earth space,
Wherever conditions of living there be,
From the heights of the air to the depths of the sea,
And filling its man-read record of time,
From Saurians that wallowed in primeval slime,
To the latest development of brute—
The ripest evolutionary fruit
Of man's beast-taming and wealth-pursuit—
Though speechless, ye doubtless groan,
With deep inarticulate moan
(As did those the past æons have turned to stone),
For the ampler life to which ye but tend,
By structure and functions intimate blend,
In modes of vitality without end.

Each chrysalis, egg, or multiform germ
Of bird or fish, mammalian or worm,
Preparing for life at its natal term,
But never achieving its natural aim,
Never quite fulfilling vitality's claim,
What thousandfold throes, unseen, unknown,
Pulsate through space with mute sigh and moan.
The procreant earth and air and sea
Teeming with impulses to be
With tendencies yearning, although too crude
To become with vitality fully endued,
And overcome hindrances all too rude—

Rudimentary forms of multiple life
Perishing in pre-natal strife.

Or if as existences nobler in worth,
Nature hath brought your being to birth,
Then doth your life for its being atone
By deep, continuous, wistful groan,
For vital conditions ye cannot share—
Elemental change in earth, sea, or air,
For far issues of sense that induce despair,
Further scope of emotions thwarted and crossed,
Vague instincts and pinings obscured and lost,
Desire of more life, of freedom from pain,
The longing vague some sphere to attain,
Wherein powers blunted, and dowers long stunted
Set free from all thwarting and freshly starting
Their utmost expansion of life may gain,
And in its enjoyment for ever remain.

* * * * *

And ye, more chiefly, bound thralls
To the lusts or caprices of man,
Domiciled in his kennels or stalls,
To his use tamed, so far as he can,
For your freedom's loss have ye much to atone ?
Ye rather have ample causes to groan,
For your nature debased to man's wayward taste,
For instincts perverted to mean uses diverted,
Your passions employed to pursuits alloyed
With man's selfish greed or revengefulness fell,
Or his joys that of cruel coldheartedness tell ;

Groan not for lack of man's reasonless reason,
To Nature's own law oft the deadliest treason,
But for liberty lost at dependence' mean cost,
For ties meant to sever from kindred for ever,
For man's petty oppression that follows possession,
For mute subjection—without your election
To a long, long duration of sad imperfection.

Ye also that closest share
Man's unselfish regard and his care,
Attached to his heart by love's purest ties,
Do ye cease to pine that ye higher rise
To man's world of affection so fair?
What means then the mute appeal of your eyes,
The look of sympathy, tenderest fear,
With which ye share man's emotional sphere?
The pathetic yearning we clearly trace
In the semi-human expressive face
Of noble scions of th' canine race?

Ah, yearn ye not still for closer union,
Further share in man's hid mysterious communion,
Earnest longing—in human mode to tell
The feelings with which your brute-souls swell,
The pleasures that pulse in dumb things' breast,
By their speechless clamour feebly expressed,
Their anguish of passionate love and its force
Which stints at its well-spring life's vital course?
What else but an ardour stronger than death
Could stem the flow of life's passionate breath;
When beasts and birds mutely droop and die
For that those they love are no more nigh;

When the dog for its dead lord's passionate crave
Expend its last sigh on his new-made grave ?
In brief, the devotion in brutes that burns
In so many forms, and so helplessly yearns,
 Your groan is not quenched
 Nor your ardour blenched,
That desire ye share which all limits spurns.

No ! the higher ye rise in humanity's scale,
The more human cravings begin to prevail ;
 Placed on the ladder's lower flight,
Whose top-rung is hidden far, far out of sight
 In the roseate mist of the infinite,
 'Tis meet that ye groan,
 In man-sharing moan,
For some sphere of existence beyond your own,
 Where the love may find vent,
 Whose stifled content
By partial outlet is but partially spent.

* * * * *

And ye, nobler beings, who inherit
 As those who possess
Heaven's gift, " the firstfruits of the Spirit,"
 The ingrowing impulse and stress
To achieve the full goal of man's merit,
 And to rest uncontented with less :
Give the vent to your unsated yearnings,
Which their right and your nature demand ;
Let your more human ardours mature and expand
To all ye can gain of the earnings,

Which belong of due right
 To energized might,
 Struggling through darkness to mount unto light.

All the while, prepare for the fate
 Of yearnings so boundlessly great
 That no power of earth,
 Or heaven's goodlier worth,
 Might hope their aspirings to sate.
 On every side thwarted and crossed
 Your strivings, though great their cost,
 In respect of achievement must needs be lost.

Ye endeavour to mount to a nobler sphere,
 Wherein aptitudes, crushed by obstruction drear,
 May freely expand—from hindrances clear.

Or ye would that saintly perfection win—
 Man's freedom from evil—without, within,
 Till Virtue be crowned on the throne of sin :

Or ye ardently thirst the Truth to acquire,
 On the wings of Reason to mount ever higher,
 Till ye bask in the light of her luminous fire.

Alas ! ye strive without avail :
 Were Holiness gained—its lustre would pale,
 Truth-search of its finding must ever fail.
 The higher ye climb
 The mountains sublime,
 The loftiest altitudes built by time,
 Thinking—to know Truth's utmost bound—
 That the limit of Holiness might be found,
 Your eyes survey an e'er widening round.

Truth on the height with eyes that strain,
 Is further distant than on the plain ;
 And he who Holiness would acquire
 Must content himself with fanning the fire
 Of a burning yet all unconsumed desire.

* * * * *

Yet, what were earth without the bliss
 Of a hope even dim and untested as this ;
 Where no ideal space, an atmosphere fair,
 A rainbow-suffused and sun-fed air
 Floated airily round
 The circled ground
 Of dull reality's sordid bound ;
 Where human fancies were wingless born,
 And aspiration awoke but scorn,
 And faith had no heaven whereunto to climb,
 And love owned no Fatherhood sublime ;
 Where no devout vision with piercing glance
 Could penetrate the dark canopy
 Marking the limits man's eye might see ;
 Where no blithe romance
 And tender yearning conspired to enhance
 The petty concerns of our petty earth,
 Investing them with perennial worth ?

Sufficiently dark is man's world, God knows,
 For that hope with no fiercer brightness glows,
 That it lacks the skill
 With its spirit all human souls to fill ;
 That it fluctuates from time to time,
 From piteous weakness to strength sublime.

But what men were—with hope wholly mute,
 Of foresight and yearning destitute,
 Almost passes conjecture—a stringless lute
 Whose tuneful breath
 Is quenched for ever in musicless death—
 A grovelling being, far beneath the brute.

* * * * *

And the groan of man, if it be self-spent,
 If it find for the time no articulate vent
 In noble resolve or clear practical bent ;
 If it be the dim voice suppressed,
 A futile powerless moan
 Of volcanic throes of unrest,
 Struggling in vain in the breast,
 For such helplessness it may itself atone
 Since a groan may be the sole possible test
 Of eagerest effort for what is best.

Hears not heaven the passionate strain
 Which strives with its limits, albeit in vain,
 The moan of a thought that cannot become fact,
 The cry of volition unable to act,
 The piteous wail which will not be hush'd,
 Of a noble life stunted—schemes maimed and crush'd ?

The aspiration for Holiness
 Which cannot subdue the opposing stress
 Of evil surroundings in dire excess.

The devotion to Truth, a lifelong rage,
 Commencing with youth, protracted to age,
 Which no thwarting or effort serves to assuage.

The desire for Goodness, that man to his best
Should agonize always with holy unrest,
Though scant success the zeal may have blest.

Are not these desires the incense of heaven,
Ascending for ever, huge mists of sighs,
Heavy clouds condensed of yearning cries,
Vapours distilled from tear-filled eyes.
The smoke that from man's altar-fires arise?
And is not the instinct divinely given?

We *must* believe

Such strivings are destined due end to achieve.
That, unlike physical mists that ascend,
Condense into clouds and find their end
In the shower that falls, to form anew
The rising mists from the which they grew,
They mount to a higher than earthly sphere,
To empyrean heights, where the heavens are clear,
Where they become
Realized 'neath heaven's radiant dome,
Of perfect achievement the deathless home.

* * * * *

Then groan, groan, O earth,
As a mother in throes of birth ;
Sea and land and sky,
Join the parturient cry.

Groan, though your groan have no actual worth,
Except to prove your god-given dearth ;
To show your present unwilling subjection
To vanity's transient, inglorious defection .
From heaven's celestially destined perfection.

Such is our tremulous eager hope,
 Buoying us with its inspiriting ray,
As we wearily climb the darkened slope,
 Crowned by the sun of celestial day.

Surely men's cries in a future sphere
Shall attain the fruition they lacked here ;
Evolution's law, with our infelt desires,
To such consummated truth conspires,

There shall the weak-kneed craven despair,
Unable to reach the bracing air
Of resolute act or attainment fair,
Its deserved achievement fully share.

There must all germs of truth divine,
In ungenial mediums now doomed to pine,
With their native energy burgeon anew
And reach the expansion that is their due

There all aspirings of saints that aspire
Shall attain the completion of holy desire ;
And souls exulting in sense exemption
Shall gain their birthright, eternal redemption.

 Thus creation's groan,
 In each sigh and moan,
Of all its diversified yearning tone,
Each restless cry of divine privation,
Each noble appeal against ruthless frustration,
Its purpose accomplished of patience-tuition
Shall attain its promised consummation,
Becoming a pæan of triumphant fruition.

HEAVEN'S SILENT TENT.

“Thou shalt hide them privily . . . in Thy tabernacle, from the strife of tongues.”—Ps. xxxi. 22.

FAIR mystic tent,
Enclosing in its circular content
Sweet privacy—on meditation bent.

Not silk or stuff
Thy frame, nor human fabric smooth or rough
Yet for its use, with folds drawn close enough,

Thy web unbought
In crowded market, or by men's hands wrought,
Is but the curtain self-enclosed of Thought :

But Thought divine,
With Heaven or Nature ruling its confine,
Containing of man's sordid life, no sign.

Within the veil
Of that pavilion may no power assail
And break Heaven's stillnesses that there prevail.

There in sweet peace
The mind may ruminate without surcease,
And Aspiration's wings claim longed release.

Outside, the crowd
With strife of tongues may vent their clamour loud ;
Harsh cries of greed—loud vauntings of the proud.

Their madd'ning roar
Through thy closed circuit finds no crevice door
Or else is heard as some far sea-washed shore.

Men may such tent
Erect, wherever thought is duly pent
Or pious yearning finds fit place for vent.

On the lone moor
Of gorse in bloom, spread as a golden floor,
While to the spring's sun larks sweet carols pour.

On mountains high,
Where earth and man withdrawn seem both to lie
In fitting deeps, and Heaven alone is nigh.

Or the green wood,
When spring-tide energies are in high flood,
And Nature's self assumes a pensive mood.

Or by the sea,
Where thought is nursed by promptings wild and free,
And soothed by ocean's suave monotony.

Where'er men rude
With their discordant noise dare not intrude
Nor yield for contemplation bitterest food.

In thy still tent,
In its calm pensiveness finding content,
I pray that all my musing years be spent.

F R E E D O M .

Harsh seems thy conduct, Nemesis,
Blasting each fruiting flower of bliss
 With thy frustration.
With every hope of human heart,
Some blended fear must thou impart,
That when most ripening thou wilt thwart
 Its consummation.

Thus each man's cup of joy thou singlest,
And in its luscious blend comminglest
 Bitter infusion.
We formulate life's premisses,
As joys perennial genesis,
And then thou bringest, Nemesis,
 Thy dread conclusion.

Yet bracing is thy bitter smart
To sanguine mood and buoyant heart,
 Goddess of sadness.
Since on man's heels creeps ever near
The shadow chill of change or fear,
Tis well to tame with glance austere
 All thoughtless gladness.

Careless of fortune's fickle chance,
Lapt in soft plenty's dalliance,
 Men sleep serene,
Till warning grim thou dost impart,
By mocking smile or poisoned dart,
That fortune's joy hath after smart,
 And anguish keen.

When Fancy, urging daring flight,
O'erscales all moderate human height,
 And upward flies ;
As erst those Titans of renown,
Who Zeus would rob of realm and crown,
Thy function 'tis to fright her down
 From alien skies.

When Fortune darts with lawless wings,
Beyond the mean of human things,
 Too eager course :
When sudden affluence or power,
Upstarting in a transient hour,
Claims bliss for a perennial dower,
 Thou add'st thy curse.

Or when o'ervaulting human pride,
Advances with contemptuous stride
 O'er law and reason.
When purse-proud wealth, or blood-proud birth,
Hath too large share of common earth,
And dustward tramples humbler worth,
 Thou claim'st thy season.

Who durst then say all useless is
The part thou playest, Nemesis,
 In men's affairs ?
Stern teacher of humility,
Wisest of men are they who see,
In mercy not in cruelty,
 Thou mock'st their airs.

Hence, though men spurn thy discipline,
And at thy thwarting oft repine,
 Dread Nemesis ;
Yet for man's fate is he armed best,
Whom thy stern visage and thy hest,
Are powerless to make all unblest,
 Or bare of bliss.

And though thy name is heard no more,
In bodeful whisper, as of yore
 By pagan devotee.
Though thou hast long departed hence,
'Tis most in title—not in sense,
Men still assign to Providence
 The rôle they once gave thee.

THOUGHT AND SORROW.

TWIN sisters I deem ye,
Pale Thought and deep Sorrow;
Each her lineaments seem ye
From the other to borrow.

The same grave expression
Ye depict on man's face ;
And like plaintive depression
On his features ye trace.

On woman's pale brow ye
Both carve the same lines ;
On man's forehead plough ye,
Like care-wrinkled signs.

With the same sad still light
Each eye do ye kindle ;
Ye make it more bright,
Or its firiness dwindle.

In the same deep-drawn way,
Sigh alike Thought and Sorrow ;
He who broods deep to-day,
He who bodes ill to-morrow.

The lips curve sedate
Ye limn in like fashion,
To mark musings when great,
Or grief's mournful passion.

To each other ye lend,
In men younger or older,
The same pensive bend,
Of head and of shoulder.

Man's slow mournful gait
In like manner ye share ;
Ye both crawl at the rate
Of beings burdened with care.

Words in common, as "pensive,"
Ye partake, Thought and Sorrow
Each her terms apprehensive,
From the other ye borrow.

If difference between ye
Perchance there might be,
'Tis the difference mainly
That is "of degree."

If pale Thought wears an air
Of sombre ungladness,
Sorrow hath as her share
More positive sadness.

Or urge we more just,
Thought doth doing imply,
While Sorrow's rôle must
In mute suffering lie.

Yet are suff'ring and doing
In essence the same,
Each is test of man's going,
Each his vigour may tame.

If the rapt air of Thought
We call fitly "abstraction,"
While Sorrow's onslaught,
We say ends in "distraction;"

Both terms but declare,
In co-equal concession,
Thought and Sorrow both share
Alike lost self-possession.

By your kinship what mean ye,
Pale Thought and lean Sorrow,
That your features are seen, ye
Share likeness so thorough?

Does it mean that deep Thought
Is by Sorrow attended,
And that Sorrow is taught
By deep Thought to be friended?

Does it mean that while life
Needs must grief find or borrow,
Men's Thought is aye rife
With objects of sorrow?

Twin sisters I deem ye,
Pale Thought and lean Sorrow,
Each her lineaments seem ye
From the other to borrow.

FATE AND MAN.

MEANING well, men compass ill,
Scheming ill, they good fulfil ;
Such is Fate's ironic will,
Such her metamorphic skill,
From one substance to distil,
Balm to quicken—bane to kill.

Children-like, our laps we load
With flowers culled upon life's road ;
These we bear to Fate's abode,
Nothing witting, but her mode
To distil, from gifts bestowed,
Drugs that solace or corrode.

Fate is sightless, Fate is free,
Yet her limits knoweth she ;
Thus, though purblind mortals, we
All her methods cannot see,
Yet we know supreme is He
Who hath made Fate blind and free.

THOUGHT AND LIFE.

THINKING, musing all the day,
With such "thought-stuff" as I may,
Thus I think my life away.

Life would seem a dreary ruse,
Full of guile and void of use,
Could I not upon it muse.

As it is, man's life seems meant,
Given for this chief intent,
In thought-labour to be spent.

An enigma that allures,
Which no solving ever cures,
And as long as life endures.

Food for Thought is everywhere,
In all objects Sense can share,
In all notions Fancy dare.

Into Being it boldly pries,
Seeks with spirit-eager eyes,
What lies hid 'neath her disguise.

Thought explores the universe,
Makes it all its tale rehearse,
Common prose or mystic verse ;

Nor is Thought a whit dismayed,
When, for all its labours paid,
Small achievement it hath made.

Searches Thought the world of man,
Since the æons it began,
Though the whole it fail to scan.

Thought explores the realm of mind,
Seeking of man's soul to find,
Ties which to the world-soul bind.

Thought looks onward, fancy free,
To man's future destiny,
Groping where it cannot see.

Thought looks upward, soaring high,
Minded e'en to pierce the sky,
Lifting up its yearning cry.

What hath Thought, then, for her pains,
Fact or knowledge that remains,
As her lifelong labour-gains ?

This, true Life by earnest Thought,
To a higher Life is wrought,
Though it find not what it sought.

Thought being manhood's noblest pride,
Life, its sphere that doth provide,
By *itself* is glorified.

THOUGHT AND LOVE.

LOVE's truest worth, all wise men know,
Is then most proven—when its glow
From its warm source alone doth flow.

For if men loved but to possess,
And on Love's guerdon laid sole stress,
Alloyed were Love with selfishness.

And Thought like Love doth worthier prove,
Where joy of Thought doth thinking move,
And its own rapture kindles Love.

For if men thought but to attain,
As those who work for sordid gain.
Thought's nobler essence greed would stain.

* * * * *

Pure Thought and Love in this agree ;
In their spontaneous energy
They find their sole reward and fee,
Nor sell themselves for usury.

LIFE AND PAIN.

SAID Life, constricted and half-crushed by Pain,
 “ Tell why or whence
Thou camest, my companion and my bane,
 My master-sense.

“ Since birth thy weighty and continuous load
 Hath on me pressed,
This weak frame thou hast chosen thy abode
 To its unrest.

“ Thou, with thy mates, Disease and Death dost blur,
 Man’s being else bright ;
I marvel what foul ill he did t’ incur
 Thy ruthless spite.

“ More irksome thou, than e’en Disease and Death ;
 Oft painless these.
A pang thou addest to each vital breath,
 While Death brings ease.

Each wholesome sense thou bluntest, kill’st each joy ;
 Mak’st Life a waste,
Souring its sweetest pleasures with th’ alloy
 Of thy ill taste.

I trow thy source must be the source of ill,
Thy sire the devil ;
A God of goodness ne'er made thee fulfil
Function so evil."

"Cease, Life," Pain slowly answered, "thy reproach ;
All blind thou art,
If thou seest not, on thee I less encroach
Than form a part

"Of thy true being—that art organic life
Bound by its laws :
And I, what am I but organic strife,
With self-same cause.

"Thy kin, in short, am I—kin to the sense
Which proves thee living ;
My being, therefore, with its 'why,' and 'whence,'
Are of thy giving.

"Too much life or too little, both give birth
Alike to me ;
And void of Pain wert thou, with all thy worth,
In jeopardy.

"As for the suff'ring I perforce awake,
Blent 'tis with good ;
I stimulate as well as crush, so take
A varying mood.

"Nor otherwise than thou have I my source,
The prince of ill ;
He taught me, who determined thine own course,
My part to fill.

“ Nay, more ; I watch thy interests with zeal,
I give alarm,
When Death, thy mightiest foe, would near thee steal
To work thee harm.

“ Nay, dead wert thou incapable of Pain,
A stock or stone. ”
Here ceased the talk, for Pain, bestirr'd again,
Made poor Life moan.

*THE BEGINNINGS OF LIFE. WHAT
ARE THEY LIKE.*

A SUMMER day's dawn, fresh, dewy and grey,
Ere it wither and blench in the sun's noon ray,
And grows arid and faint ere it passeth away.

The opening fair of a new-blown rose,
In hue and in beauty how sweetly it glows,
Till matured and faded less perfect it grows.

The fresh tints of a tree as it buddeth in spring,
Ere summer its heat and languor doth bring,
And autumn's red blight to each leaf doth cling.

The bloom on the cheek of a maiden fair,
When health, youth, and beauty sit crownèd there,
Till destroyed by the wrinkles of life and its care.

The yearning for fame in a young man's breast,
To cope with his fellows and come off best,
Till crushèd by fate, it is laid to rest.

The hope that inspires the sailor's mind,
From his voyaging riches and ease to find,
To tempest and wreck, perhaps, happily blind.

The husbandman's outlook when sowing in spring,
For the harvest the autumn will by-and-by bring,
Nor dreams he of blight or grain-hurting thing.

Whatever in life or man's lot seems fair,
That custom may stale or enjoyment impair,
Whatever grows common that once was rare.

Whatever there be of false glamour and hope,
Attractive to men 'neath the sky's blue cope,
Resembles life's dawn and its day's final scope.

PHILO'S DEFINITION OF LAUGHTER.

Ὁ ἐνδιδάθεις υἱὸς Θεοῦ.

“The ideal (or conceptual) Son of God.”

LIST, list ! O list !
Each acid-visaged pessimist,
Who fain would banish laughter from the earth,
Hear what old Philo called vocal mirth,
In terms of mystic fancy spun,
God's own “Ideal Son.”

And if some blame
Such trivial usage of God's name,
Yet they who deepliest on his words would muse,
To grant their quaintest truth need not refuse,
God is the source of joy confessed,
Man's laugh is joy expressed.

Nay, more, 'tis true,
To those who with attention due
Regard the chiefest of her varying moods,
Nature with merriment for ever broods ;
For ever bursts anew her glee
O'er earth and sky and sea.

Yes, nature laughs,
 As he who potent ether quaffs ;
 In keys and cadences myriadly various
 She vents, to ears attuned, her mirth hilarious ;
 Proving by parallel reason's force,
 She too hath divine source.

Her laughter trills,
 In brawling streams and gurgling rills,
 In song of bird and breeze and murm'ring sea,
 In rustling corn or many-leafèd tree ;
 In thunder, hail, or pattering rain,
 Each in befitting strain.

The lord of day,
 Whene'er unclouded he hath sway,
 With laughter fills earth's circumambient space,
 Proving that like man's God-begotten race,
 The light must come of source divine
 That doth so blithely shine.

Well defined one—
 " A laughing animal is man,"
 Laughter being thus the human attribute,
 Which demarcates his species from the brute ;
 So lifts him, urgèd Philo, high,
 Even heavenward to the sky.

Then, men of earth,
 Give utterance to all honest mirth ;
 So nature, manhood, and high heaven all urge,
 From pessimistic woe yourselves emerge ;
 And Philo's " Son of God Ideal,"
 In blameless mirth *make real*.

Since clear to eye
Of every seer is the tie
Which joins each God-denier to the pessimist :—
They who joy's source have from His world dismiss'd,
Pursue their course as they begun,
When they destroy *His Son*.

LIFE—AN IMAGE EMBLEM.

OBSERVE yon baby-boy, curled kitten wise
Upon his couch, and deeply lapp'd in sleep.
His lips shape sweetly to a smile, as though
With angels he held converse in his dreams ;
Or haply with unconscious suction seem
To draw in slumber from the vision-fount,
Which yields heaven-nourishment to infant dreams.
His dimpled fist rests careless on the toy,
His mother's latest gift, that most had stirr'd
His nascent powers of curious interest.

* * * * *

A while ago he pondered the new gift
With infant wonderment and much request,
By inarticulate sounds and keener signs,
That she who gave the wonder-gift would add
Some explication of its novel powers—
The toy-horse galloping with mimic bound,
Beating its hoofs upon a drum, or else
Some other blend of motion and of sound,
Attractive to an infant's ear and eye.

* * * * *

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The mother could not ope to infant sense,
What infant senses could not apprehend,
And so his quest unsped, his marvel drowned
In all-subduing slumber, sleeps the child,
Resting his hand upon the puzzling toy.

* * * * *

A living emblem of man's strange sad life,
A riddling gift consigned to infant hands,
He muses on its mystery, infant wise,
Demands with lispng utterance what it means,
But finds no answer to his childish quest ;
Then, wearying of the marvel and its use,
He falls asleep and ends his quest in dreams.

A QUESTION AND ANSWER.

Question.

“O WHERE doth love bide ? Tell me true.”

Answer.

Love's bidding places be not few :
I tell you, where ye may pursue,
Though if ye find him ye may rue.

Love lurks where'er he findeth place
In beauty, goodness, truth, or grace,
In heart, or mind, or form, or face.

Love nestleth in the lover's eye,
Whose light grows dull, love not being nigh,
But flasheth brightly when he is bye.

Love basketh in my fair one's smile,
As bask the flowers, and laugh, the while
The sun's caress doth them beguile.

Love in her dimples makes its nest,
Wherein he lurks a wanton guest,
Launching his bolt at every breast.

Love hideth in her wavy hair,
As in a bower close and fair,
Whence he shoots forth, ere one is 'ware.

Love breatheth in her gentle sigh,
As when a zephyr passing by
And growing faint doth softly die.

Love speaketh in her mellow voice,
As when the thrill of music choice
Bids every hearer's heart rejoice.

Love standeth in her graceful pose,
And vests him in her dainty clothes,
Thus joy on every eye bestows.

Love walketh in her stately pace,
Sweet motion wherein all may trace
Soft dignity and gentle grace.

But chiefest Love finds ampler seat—
Her life adorned with all things meet,
Whence shining forth men's eyes do greet.

For all her words be soft and kind,
Fair issue of a noble mind
And true—with no masked thought behind.

Her deeds with words be matchèd well,
Both in one strain accordant tell
How sweet the founts such streams impel.

But what avails each biding place
Of Love to tell, if when his face
I find, he will not yield me grace ?

Yet Love well lovèd still doth give
Itself as life whereby I live,
Though I should nothing else receive.

* * * * *

Thus have I told haunts not a few
Where Love lurks, though if ye pursue
And find him, ye may haply rue.

DOGMA-METHOD.

“Mahomet well understood the effect upon doubters of the bold enunciation of a doctrine when he gave the famous precept—‘The infidels say there is no Resurrection, say ye unto them, Verily, and by God there is a Resurrection.’”—C. W. KING, *Gnostics and their Remains*.

THY insight, prophet, might be called divine,
If not thyself—and justifies the shrine
 Which millions of thy fellow men have raised
Unto thy wisdom—noted by this sign.

In human nature learned, thou didst perceive
How men are led conviction to achieve ;
 What force coerces most their minds, and makes
Them ready all new tenets to receive.

For men are moved by force of will and word
(I mean not thinkers, but the common herd) ;
 And yield to reassertion strongly made
If not the second time, at least the third.

They want no argument or logic force
To steer conviction on some novel course ;
 Belief is hard when based on reasoned thought,
Assertion gives to faith far easier source.

Besides, all questing opes the door to doubt,
And facile faith puts to an open rout ;
 The strong assertion has its strength allowed,
While cautious reasoning men as weakness scout.

Most human leaders, like Mohammed, know
How faith in human souls is made to grow ;
 And on their tenets, pure assertion's stress,
With strong asseverations meet, bestow.

So when their dogmas strange they loudly blaze,
And man's frail sense of wonderment amaze,
 They vent belief as demonstrations sure,
And add some " Verily and by God " -like phrase.

Then human teachers, clerical and lay,
Learn well the secret of Mohammed's sway ;
 On argument or proof waste not your strength,
On hardy strong assertion be your stay.

SUCCESS AND FAILURE.

WHAT is failure ? what success ?
We do not know, we can but guess ;
At least, we ought to pause a while,
Ere either cause our frown or smile.

What failure seems may be the test
Of good becoming better, best,
And what at first success may seem,
May vanish quickly as a dream.

Failure may quicken laggard speed,
In the steep path we should proceed ;
Success our energy may quell,
Unman us with its dead'ning spell.

'Tis ever doubtful—if success
With all its fancied bliss will bless ;
'Tis ever certain—to the wise
Failures prove blessings in disguise.

Failure may merely indicate
These forces which our aims frustrate
Were agencies beyond our scope
With which we lackèd power to cope.

Success may be th' undoubted proof
That from our merits far aloof
Were causes incident but strong
Which bore our trembling bark along.

For in our life's beclouded maze,
Our dim eyes peering through the haze
Obscurely dream—our issues come
In part beneath—a rule of thumb.

Despite what sages say, man's will
Doth its own vagrant course fulfil ;
And all results which find their source
In that, evince uncertain force.

Man's life is like the sailing bark,
Steering through waters swoln and dark,
And what impels its course half blind
Is the uncertain varying wind.

Man's lot were best wherein success,
With failure mingled, shared its stress,
And each with wholesome influence rife
Gave impetus to noble life.

THE AGNOSTIC'S APOLOGY.

AGNOSTIC call ye me,
So 'tis my boast to be ;
So true a truth can I,
For truth's sake not deny.
Nor singular my fate,
My mere non-knowing state ;
All knowers, I believe,
Do but themselves deceive.
They deem that knowledge true
They zealously pursue,
Lacking the wit to learn
False knowledge to discern,
Wholly unskilled to trace
The mask upon her face.

Like children, apt to deem,
That true which so doth seem,
They question not, but take
The impress things first make ;
Their dolls and lifeless toys
Are living girls and boys,
Whose talk and mock-play due
Are in their pretence true.

Glamour is spread o'er all
That doth their minds enthrall ;
Unable yet to feel
Their child-world is unreal.

So Gnostics may believe
All true that they receive
By out- or inward sense,
Ne'er asking why or whence,
Nor shunning mere pretence ;
Unminding of the guise
Truth takes to mock th' unwise,
And dust fling in their eyes.
Such conduct plain I see,
To be truth's mockery ;
I therefore say and feel
Truth mostly is unreal
Or hard to be found out ;
Thus room is left for doubt,
At least the *why* and *whence*
Must justify suspense,
And so Agnostic I
Remain without a sigh.

Some time I yet may know,
When mind and knowledge grow
To higher stages than
Are now conceived by man.
However this may be,
My duty clear I see
To truth and conscience too
Is not to call that true

But what will stand appeal
(Whate'er I think or feel),
To conscience and to truth,
"Above all duties, sooth,"
Such is the maxim, I
For trust and strength rely,
Nor better I descry
By which to live and die.

“ TAKE IT FOR GRANTED ; ” OR, THE
METHOD OF THE UNIDEAD.

THROUGH life by restless cravings stirr'd,
How oft the *dictum* I have heard,
Whene'er a problem solv'd I wanted,
“ You'd better take all that for granted.”

“ Teach me,” said I, “ ye men of thought,
Who certitude yourselves have taught,
The truth ye claim with minds undaunted ; ”
Said they, “ You'd best take all for granted.

“ You will not gain, with all your quest,
But deeper stirrings of unrest,
Your vague desires our souls once haunted,
Now we take everything for granted.

“ Whatever truth to human ken
Is commonly received by men,
We in our bosoms haste to plant it,
All human truth we take for granted.”

Whereto I answered, “ Sooth to tell,
Your requiem doth not please me well,
However much for rest I panted,
I dared not take all truth for granted.

“Truth so acquired scarce seems my own,
From lie to lie I’m restless thrown,
Though on its claims all men descanted,
I *could* not take a truth for granted.

“Besides, your truths be oft opposed,
So to your plea were I disposed
To yield—by this were I still daunted,
Which truth am I to take for granted?

“One truth saith ‘Yea,’ another ‘Nay,’
’Tis black as night or bright as day ;
Howe’er their claims both proudly flaunted,
I could not take the *twain* for granted.”

But all remonstrances were vain,
The plea was urged on me again ;
But to no use its force men vaunted,
I *could* not take my truth for granted.

*ON A VOLUME OF POMPONAZZI'S
WORKS, A.D. 1497.*

INTO the shoreless ocean of the past,
Where all time's currents end their course at last,
Four centuries their myriad streams have poured,
Since on a careless world thy lot was cast.

As a spring bubbling by the lone by-way,
Part hid from hostile gaze and noon sun's ray,
By wreathèd wealth of ferns and herbage sweet,
Yet known and visited day after day

By thirsty pilgrims—so a truth-primed book,
Though born and cradled in some obscure nook
Of human thought—yet yielding sweetest draughts
To those who, truth-impelled, within it look.

And travellers pass successive the lone road,
By all but kindred pilgrims sparsely trode,
Then turn aside, and slaking burning thirst,
Pursue, refreshed, their way to truth's abode.

Haply they deemed—the stream from such a fount
Needs must—so strong its impulse—soon surmount
The hindrances that now its course impede,
And grow, till men its flow a river count.

At least, Fate gave it birth when great the need
Of some such stream to fit for fruitful seed

The arid waste of human ignorance,
And harvests rear of corn, not noxious weed.

As when upon a longsomed night and drear,
A star of morn arises crisp and clear,
And men, night-wearied, shout, "See yonder sign,
Whose radiant tongue announces day is near."

Too hasty forecast—witless of the blight
O'er human vision shed by long-borne night,
As eyes to murkiest darkness long inured,
Thence grown inapt to bear the sweet sunlight.

I muse upon thy fortune, noble book,
Since eyes long death-quenched first did on thee look,
And sparkling flashed new wisdom to the mind,
Whence haply some their misbeliefs forsook.

How oft on dusty shelves thou long hast lain,
Victim of ignorance, or mayhap, disdain,
Or striking chance attention for a time,
Then back relapsing to the dust again.

Yet we feel sure thou hadst a worthier fate
Than kindling sparks in some chance sluggard-pate,
Successions of rare spirits have in thee
Found truth and light, and through thee have grown great.

We know and love the thought whose freedom high
To thy mute pages did their life supply,
Thou art its best-born offspring, and we prize
Thee as a pledge of truth that cannot die.

As from far east to west the lightning gleams,
Riving the darkness with its forkèd beams,
 Stirring men's languor with its stormy light,
And rousing them from inert passive dreams.

So thwart the centuries beams forth the light
Whose first flash wakened mediæval night,
 And though yon midnight darkness vanquished seems,
To us thy radiance now as then gleams bright.

For Light and Truth are one, however born,
By centuries sundered, veiled by human scorn,
 No need to prove the sun that saw thy birth
Was the same sun that rose this very morn.

DESPAIR.

YE troubled thoughts that fret the human soul,
Surveying of man's world the complex whole,
To your deep musings on his final goal,
Will ye find clue?

Ye feelings that o'erbrim the laden breast,
That right must triumph, wrong must be redressed,
Ill change to good, and better become best,
Will ye prove true?

Ye eager hopes that span man's bounded scene,
Expending faith and love on worlds unseen,
And heaven transpiercing with your vision keen,
Say, will ye speed?

Ye fond desires that to the future turn,
And sore for its veiled revelations yearn,
Wistful somehow its boundless lore to learn,
Can ye succeed?

Instincts derived, we know not whence nor why,
That bid us deem we shall not wholly die,
But find enlarged existence by-and-by,
Do ye say well?

Ye dreams of Truth and Beauty infinite,
That haunt us slumbering in our nescience night,
Will ye prove real in some far-off daylight ?
We cannot tell.

ON GIORDANO BRUNO'S FÊTE.

NAPLES AND NOLA, JUNE 10, 1888.

I.

THE lapse of time restores the lapse of truth,
Transforms the heretic who died in scorn—
In learning aged, though in years a youth—
To the famed hero of men yet unborn.

For, moved by anger and by tender ruth,
For life and death in fortune so forlorn,
Thy countrymen award thy self and sooth
A glorious triumph on this summer morn.

Thy lovèd Nola smiles and blooms as fair
As when it glowèd in thy youthful eyes,
Vesuvius wafts its smoke-drifts in the air,
As when it stirr'd thy nascent thought's surprise,
Nature remains the same—'tis only man
Whose moods change ever with his brief life-span.

II.

Scorner of earth for its mere pettiness,
While roaming through th' aërial infinite,
Despiser of men's learning for its stress
On unproved dogma, and its freedom-blight :

Disdainful of the age that wrought thy fate,
And yearning for the future's undawned light,
Haply some forecast of this far-off date
Relieved the gloom of thy long-suffering night.

Mayhap thou sawest in thy throngèd pyre
These crowds, thy free aspirings who aspire ;
In place of stake and chain in grim array,
Yon statue crowned with wreathèd flowers gay,
And in thy martyr fire's lurid flame
The coming glow of thy triumphant fame.

THE DREAM OF LIFE.

THE MORAL OF CALDERON'S "LA VIDA ES SUEÑO."

Two dream worlds fill my round of life, one night,
The other, day ; in this I move, act, feel,
With beings as I—all in a world mock-real,
While that the sun diffuseth his warm light.

Anon through midnight gloom steals on my sight
Another vision world—piercing the seal
Of sleep-set eyes ; to inner sense appeal
New scenes of life in motley hues bedight.

Alike in shadowy impress, transient stay,
Bewitching realness, seems each vision realm,
Ceaseless they alternate, nor can I say,
If sleep, or waking, dream most rule life's helm ;
Indeed I know not, question as I may,
Which dream is truer—that of night or day.

TO BOCCACCIO'S "DECAMERON."

A NEW-BORN age—with fervid pulse of thought
And deed—symbolized fairly by the masque
Of youths and maidens who in dalliance bask,
By eager thirst of pleasure over-wrought.

Across thy page, as by a mirror caught,
Moves the gay pageant, whose enamoured task
Is sympathy with grace and wit to ask,
And tell how life by fiction fair is taught.

Fair image of the time that gave thee birth,
Of all its scenic tumult, wail, or mirth—
The myriad interests of the new-found earth ;
Reflecting too past ties to oblivion hurled,
And Nature's flag too flauntingly unfurled—
The potent birth-throes of our modern world.

ON GEORGE ELIOT'S WORKS AND
LIFE.

PRO AND CON.

I. *Pro.*

THE thinker's written works let me peruse,
The calm deliberate finding of his thought,
His smelted ore to purity well brought,
And coined in golden words for human use.

Compared with this, his life one might refuse
As less his own, being haply over-wrought
By adverse influence, or temptation-caught,
Or noble passions, seeding to abuse.

So Bacon, Raleigh, she of virile name,
I love to read in their less-biassed work,
Scorning to grope where envious ill-fame,
In lives sore pressed might find a hole to lurk.
Who in ill-garb or mood would choose to paint
For daily gaze—his chosen friend or saint ?

2. *Con.*

Man's written and enacted works form part,
Whole, undivided, of one heart and mind,
Twain streams, which diverse courses though they find,
From the same fount first take their bubbling start.

The pen-stream may lack cause to turn athwart :
The stream of life—by other lives confined,
May run awry—through hindrances unkind,
Yet both should prove their well-spring in one heart.

For if their waters differ, one being bright,
The other turbid, men may fairly ask,
Which brings the man's true nature most to light ?
Which gives the face, and which the mocking mask
A worthy life must form one congruous whole
Dichotomize—you slay man's living soul.

TO JUSTUS LIPSIUS.

ON HIS MOTTO, "MORIBUS ANTIQUIS."

A VALIANT motto, Lipsius, that of thine,
One versèd as thyself in ancient lore,
On *ancient manners* well might set a store ;
He best may boast the ore, who works the mine.

And *ancient manners* were a fitting sign
Of the brave character the ancients bore,
True simple manliness to the heart's core,
With which their lustrous memories still shine.

Alas ! poor wretch, thou wert a very thrall
Of men and creeds, whatever might befall,
A scholar's chequered course in times of strife,
Thy motto formed the converse of thy life,
Thy *manners* were unstable, coward, weak,
Only thy lying motto was *antique*.

AT DR. C. BEARD'S GRAVE.

LIVERPOOL, APRIL, 1888.

UNSEEN by eyes in spirit-sense untaught,
Though sympathetic hearts their presence feel,
Beside his grave, two Spirit-Mourners kneel,
By common loss to common sorrow wrought.

Religion mourns the seer who wisely sought
Reason and Faith to urge their joint appeal,
Culture bemoans who set his own heart's seal
On every form of Light and truthful Thought.

Seemly their presence in the mourning crowd,
To whom his life with all its powers was vowed,
Since Culture and Religion duly blent,
Formed with their energies its rich content ;
Both used to point to men the road he trod,
With steps unfaltering—" *The soul's way to God.*"

PLATO'S IDEAL MATRIMONY.

THE HALF-SOUL TO ITS UNDISCOVERED MOIETY.

Ἔστι δὴ οὖν ἐκ τόσου ὁ ἔρως ἔμφυτος ἀλλήλων τοῖς ἀνθρώποις καὶ τῆς ἀρχαίας φύσεως συναγωγῆς καὶ ἐπιχειρῶν ποιῆσαι ἐν ἑκ δυοῖν καὶ ἰάσασθαι τὴν φύσιν τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην.—PLATO, "*Symposium*," 191, Steph.

SINCE I, divine Hellene,
Thy pupil rapt have been,
I strive to turn to actual use thy lore serene.

That old myth quaintly sweet,
Seems for my half-self meet,
And closer brings the sense that I am incomplete.

Embodied counterpart
Of wants that rend my heart,
I grieve that cruel destiny keeps us apart.

Half complemental soul,
Needed to make me whole,
How ardently, love stung, I seek completion's goal.

Long have I sought for thee,
Sufficing moiety,
Yet no trace of thy being or presence can I see.

Except it be the want
 The void of thee doth plant
 Within my breast, and makes each sigh an anguished
 pant.

I know the spirit-needs,
 My partialness e'er breeds,
 In thee will find the peace which from *the whole* pro-
 ceeds.

I own I love to soar
 To heights where sense no more
 Can find a solid foothold for her earth-born lore.

To dreaminess inclined,
 Haply my aërial mind
 Might in thy opposite bent its due corrective find.

My o'er charged sentiment,
 Fell source of discontent,
 Now damm'd may find in thee perhaps its natural vent.

My yearnings keen in sense,
 In volume are immense,
 Diffused o'er twice their area may be less intense.

All plaintively I muse
 On thine abundant use,
 Which thy continued sunderment doth still refuse.

So in despair I sigh,
 To me thou com'st not nigh,
 Apart from thee I live, and so I fear must die.

* * * * *

Man's cloven soul still cleaves
To its cleft half, and grieves
That ancient marriage tie harsh fate no longer weaves.

But better the half-state,
Haply decreed by fate,
Than union with an alien half, a soul-discordant mate.

THE THINKER TO HIS HEADACHE.

HENCE ! O fierce distracting pain,
Girting round my hapless brain,
Like a close bound red-hot chain.

Thy anguish I can scarcely bear,
Nigh all the sense-power that I share
Thou wouldst pervert or from me tear.

Worse than all—thou killest thought,
By thee rendered all distraught,
Power of brain availeth naught.

Why not seize, O deadly ache,
Some other limb, and that forsake
Which for its function thought doth take.

And yet I fear thou penal art,
That too much thinking caused the smart
Which now all thinking bids depart.

But thought with brain so close akin,
More than mere wonderment doth win,
So strange it stirs the world within.

For how, when death my brain hath seized,
And numbness all its pains have eased,
Shall Thought's own instinct be appeased?

And yet, by Reason's dictates taught,
I see at large a brainless Thought,
Through all creation's scheme inwrought.

With that all knowing, planning mind,
Some likeness to the force enshrined
In my poor brain I clearly find.

Each single drop of all that fill
The ocean's unknown deeps hath still,
With all the rest like form, like will.

Each tiny particle of sand
Aids in the sloping of the strand
Which parts the salt sea from the land.

And each thought-unit, howe'er small,
Each reason-guided human soul,
Must have its portion in the whole.

*THE DEVOUT SKEPTIC'S DYING
PRAYER.*

APROPOS OF THE CREED: "I BELIEVE IN GOD. . .
AMEN."

AT last I come, O God of Truth, to thee
From human error longing to be free ;
Earth's dubious dogmas I have long since scorned,
And, tired of blindly groping, hope to see.

Men call me skeptic—this at least is truth,
Their skeptic I—distrustful of their sooth,
Their clamorous certainties, convictions rash,
Unfounded as the baseless dreams of youth.

I own it, God, my creed I have postponed,
From earth to heaven, with weakness unbemoaned ;
I dare not formulate, assert, pronounce,
Until I see Thee, who art Truth enthroned.

My mental tablet I have hence kept *razed*,
Whereat, with angry wonderment amazed,
Men with their tablets trebly written on,
And crossed and blotted, cry, "The man is crazed."

No ! mine shall be a heaven-inscribèd roll,
Truth's clear and golden impress on my soul ;
 No palimpsest, with earth-born error blurr'd,
And surface scratched ; but new and clean and whole.

Thus then, my doubt, to Thee I humbly bring,
A sacrifice to truth—far hence I fling,
 With dying breath beliefs, convictions, creeds,
Mere human baggage—to Thyself I cling.

LINES ON GEORGE ELIOT.

BRAIN of man, when at its best,
Virile thought in beauty dress'd ;
Woman's heart—when tenderest
It softly pulses in her breast.

In her writings both we trace
(As in her powerful yearning face),
Heart and brain, each there finds place,
Strength and softness, truth and grace.

In her life, her heart-pulse warm,
Unheeding checks with which men arm
Legal ties—not meaning harm,
Throbb'd too keen to friendship's charm.

Her works, with virtue's glories rife ;
Her conduct, echoing its strife ;
Ethic teacher, unwed wife ;
Not spotless, yet a noble life.

*THE EARNEST TRUTH-SEEKER TO
HIS BRAIN.*

BE still, my brain,
On Truth thou hast expended all thy strength,
Yet know'st thy labours be for all life's length
Mostly in vain.

Thou canst attain
But to some partial knowledge of Truth's lore,
A glance through the half-opened temple door,
Where she doth reign.

What wouldst thou gain ?
Wouldst thou with pride Titanic scale the sky,
And snatch Jove's sceptre that o'errules on high,
To thy own pain ?

Or art thou fain
To share the son of Dædalus' dire fate,
By striving with the solar god to mate,
With zeal insane ?

Thy eager strain,
To claim omniscience with the powers above
And soar beyond thy human bounds, doth move
High heaven's disdain.

Best know thy chain,
Whose adamantine links bind thee to earth,
And from attempts to spurn thy mortal birth
Henceforth refrain.

NARRATIVE AND LEGENDARY VERSE.

*THE SPIRIT OF CHIVALRY AT THE
GRAVE OF BAYART.*

GRENOBLE, 1524.

“ Bayart est la type du Chevalier au xvi^e siècle : . . . le niveau de la moralité, de l'humanité, de la courtoisie s'est relevé ; il y a bien plus de générosité dans la guerre, de délicatesse et de dignité dans l'amour. Cette magnanime generation des Bayart, etc., etc., finit la chevalerie ; mais la chevalerie ne pouvait plus noblement finir.”—MARTIN, *Histoire de France*, viii. p. 53.

My brave and blameless knight, a long farewell
Mutely thy grave tolls out, by yonder bell,
 Chiming its requiem with thy funeral dirge
My own approaching end, in solemn knell.

Noblest of all my sons of Chivalry,
By Virtue sired, and inspired by me ;
 My soul found fairest lodgment in thy heart,
And now is homeless, thus bereft of thee.

As when the weeping mother lays to rest,
Of all her treasured offspring, him who best
 Her high ideal has reached ; or who her hope
Most fully bodied, in her placid breast

Feels the foreboding of her nearing end,
And sings her *Nunc Dimittis* without blend
Of dole—but sighs, “Since he my best is dead,
Brief are the days I after him shall spend.”

Or as the artist concentrates his soul
Upon a work which fame writes in her roll ;
And then, his yearning sated, says content,
“This of my life work is the crownèd whole.”

So, I behold in thee the highest reach
Of manly deed, pure feeling, courteous speech,
Of gentlest bearing to the poor and weak,
Which I to thy rude fellows fain would teach.

For this my mission was—thou knew’st it well—
Men’s upstart passions and rude words to quell ;
Their life to gild with social graces sweet,
And the foul fiends of self and lust t’ expel.

I marked how men, forgetting their Liege Lord,
And their due devoir vowèd to his word
And life—now recreant from their loyalty,
With their allegiance lived in disaccord.

If bright their swords—their faith was clogg’d with rust—
They practised violence and savage lust,
Were brutes in warfare and in homely peace,
While gentle courtesy they trod to dust.

Then said I, “Heavenly Liege, this must not be,
Knights’ words and swords are thine in fealty ;
Their duteous homage, now gone far astray,
I must bring back submissively to thee.

“Oppression foul must yield to sovereign right,
Justice alone must wield the sword in fight,
Fierce brutal words henceforth must silenced be,
And Christian lowliness assert her might.

“No more must rank and wealth usurp the place
Due to the weak and poor among man’s race ;
Men must now heed—to the oppressed and weak
Our Liege Lord Christ deigned most to render grace.

“With this new gospel—Christ’s own born again,
I strove to heal and bless the sons of men ;
To humanize the world which their fell greed
And savage ways had made a wild beasts’ den.

“And many loyal sons by me endued,
Lived knightly lives, all violence eschewed,
With swords and honour bright for justice fought,
And trod beneath armed heels all manners rude.

“Thus wide and far, o’er leagues of land and sea,
Spread forth the fame of gentle Chivalry ;
And wars grew milder—peace resumed more sway,
While rage, and lust, and violence were forced to flee.

“But now my reign is o’er, my influence spent ;
The seed is scattered, I must rest content
To let it grow and fruit as best may be,
For this my mission and myself were sent.

“Not vain the inspiration which brought forth
Thyself—of Chivalry the noblest birth ;
With me thy spirit lives and shall live on,
Although its prison be resolved to earth.

“And if detraction seek, in time to come,
To blight my merits or abate their sum,
The simple ‘Look at Bayart’s life,’ shall serve
To mock her murmuring and smite her dumb.

“Since dead thou art, and I the inspiring source
Of Chivalry must take like fatal course,
I fear men will again return to brutal ways,
And once again bear sway—the rule of force.

“Woe worth the day, if ever hapless chance,
Should veil the truth of Chivalry from France,
Should kings and seigneurs trample in their might
The weak and poor, and wield the sword and lance

“Not for defence of right and equal law,
But for mere pride of heart and greed of maw,
Then shall the poor, blind raging, deem their right,
Redeemed by crime more foul than earth e’er saw.

“Farewell, dear knight. In life’s jousts thou hast won,
And in thy grave sets Chivalry’s fair sun ;
Her arms with thy dead sword and lance I place,
Useless henceforth—her earthly course is run.”

LA LOI D'AMOUR.

“ Un chevalier ayant pris la fuite à Azincourt, la dame de ses pensées s'écria, “ Selon la loi d'Amour ; je l'aurais mieux aimé mort que vif.”

“ WHAT IS THE LAW OF LOVE ?

What noblest impulses its fervour move,
What passion stirs the human breast,
So its divine unrest
With equal pulse-beat throbs to what is best
In man and in the Deity above ?”

* * * * *

A knight from Agincourt's lost field,
Afraid to die—too proud to yield
To foreign foemen, turned and fled,
Leaving his comrades, dying and dead,
Or prisoners chained. Swiftly he sped
To his vowed lady's home afar,
With mournful tidings of the war.

He mused, “ Now will my lady be,
Right joyous when she seeth me,
And certes 'twere a boon most rare,
Since scores of knights of ladies fair,

Piercèd by English arrows must,
On yonder plain have bit the dust.
Mayhap it was my lady's glove
Worn in my casque, or else her love
Encompassed me with witching charm,
And shielded me from death or harm."

He came and saw his lady fair,
Who erst was kind and debonnair,
And kneeling, to her ear revealed
The story of that fatal field.
Her favour on his lance he bore,
And on his plumèd casque he wore,
As often in the jousts before
Her dainty gage—a broidered glove,
In accord with the law of love.
Displaying these, he bashful said,
"Seeing his comrade knights were dead,
And his sole prowess nought availed,
When all their might ignobly failed,
For love of her, he turned and fled."

The lady blushed, but her fair face
And sparkling eyes scant sign of grace
To her returnèd knight conveyed,
And to his greeting nothing said.
Whereat, in turn, he now afraid
Of some offence, again essayed
A further love-plea to her ear—
She stayed him by her tones severe :

"O recreant knight, to thy disgrace
Thou vauntest thus before my face

My love it was that urged thy flight
From Agincourt's disastrous fight?
Thy plea, alas! doth clearly prove,
Ne'er hast thou learned 'the law of love.

"When I thy knightly vows first heard,
What passion think'st thou in me stirr'd
Did I not love by chivalry's law,
The virtues which methought I saw
Embodied in thy stalwart form
And life led by fair knightly norm?
But now I know thee destitute
Of all true ground for good repute
Thy soul of virtue is as mute
As of sweet sounds a broken lute.

"I loved, alas! how blind was I,
Thy chivalric nobility.
I loved the pure unselfishness
That on thy welfare laid least stress.
Valour that breathed in every word,
While recreant cowardice was unheard.
Thy boasted, proud disdain of life,
In knightly jousts or martial strife,
In fine—by false professions led,
I loved as living—what was dead.
And this thy tainted life doth prove,
When death had worthier sealed my love.

"As for thy plea—love's potent law—
I deem it marr'd by deadliest flaw;
For know, that law hath claims above,
And unlike those, thy pulses move.

'The law of love' were satisfied,
Hadst thou base love of life denied,
And on that fatal field hadst died
With cloven helm and shattered lance,
'Mid the dead chivalry of France.
Thy memory then to me were dear,
A knight without reproach or fear,
Disdaining to the foe to yield,
Or for base safety, quit the field.

"Didst thou suppose my love could stay,
When its firm grounds were sapp'd away?
Certes, a worthy love were mine,
That for dishonour's meed could pine,
And all life's noblest aims resign.
Or deem'st thou life to me were dear,
By baseness bought and craven fear?
Thy stricken corse had been to me,
Far other than the form I see,
Due symbol of the fealty
With which, against o'er-mastering might,
Thou didst knight's devoir in the fight.
The honoured shrine which once contained
Thy virtues—nay, which yet remained
Their glorious witness, e'en though mute—
Brave knighthood's meed and noblest fruit.

"Then quickly from my sight depart,
No lodgment hast thou in my heart
From henceforth; nay, return my glove—
Thou'rt recreant to 'the law of love.'"

THE CRUSADER'S LAST SACRAMENT.

The incident on which the following ballad is founded, is related in Ludlow's "Popular Epics of the Middle Ages." See "*Raoul of Cambrai*," p. 135:—"Many a gentle knight takes the sacrament with three bits of grass, *for other priest is none.*"

THE fight was done, and on the plain,
Sad relic of the strife,
A stricken knight, in th' dim twilight,
Slow yielded up his life.

Before the Soldan's fierce onslaught
His comrades were o'erthrown,
They turned and fled, while as one dead
The knight was left alone.

Hid by the twilight from his foes,
Wild ravening o'er the field,
He 'scaped their hand and ruthless brand,
Well fended by night's shield.

Then, as his ebbing strength welled forth,
Upon the starlit plain,
His life of old he now recalled,
And lived it o'er again.

He thought of home, dear wife, and child,
Unwitting of their loss,
Though he such love deemed, unworthy seemed
A soldier of the cross.

Then, as each well-marked feeling came
Of failing strength and breath,
He had recourse to all his force
To meet th' approach of death.

“Alas !” he cried, “I am denied
The Church's pious rite,
No likelihood some chance priest good
Will come nigh me to-night.

“All unconfessed and unabsolved,
Christ's body unreceived,
Here must I die, just as if I
On Him had ne'er believed.

“But stay, what means the rising doubt,
My mind must be distraught,
Needless to search for man-built church
Beneath yon starlit vault.

“Methinks I well might be content
My last sad rites were done
Beneath Heaven's dome and man's last home
Since other church is none.

“Each star with tender wistful gleam
Looks smiling down on me,

As if said each, 'Thee would we teach
God's love in us to see.'

"I take their kind benignant glance,
While I repentant moan,
To mean, 'God's love will thee absolve,'
And other priest is none.

"And for man's food: which on the rood
Christ bought with bitter price—
His body dear—I have not here,
And this must needs suffice.

"Here within reach, a root I find
Of desert-grass half-grown,
Three blades I take, for God's dear sake,
Since other priest is none.

"This for the Father, this the Son,
This for the Holy Ghost,
I eat in trust on Him the just
Whose rood-pains saved the lost.

"And, oh, may God in mercy grant,
For love of His own Son,
Dear in His sight, be this last rite,
Since other priest is none."

Thus on the plain beneath the stars
The dying man took alone
Of grass Christ's last enjoined repast
Since other bread was none.

With spirit meet the sacrament
Of Christ he thus received,
His soul full bent on its intent
Of proving he believed.

Then as each struggling breath proclaimed
His earthly warfare o'er,
His last prayer said—the knight was dead,
Nor other word spake he more.

*THE RELIGION OF SCIENCE, OR THE
SELF-SACRIFICE OF DR. RABBETH.*

OCTOBER 20, 1884.

I.

ONLY a poor little child—stretched on a hospital bed,
“Small matter,” most people would say, “whether ’twere
living or dead.”

2.

Around it the venomous croup its deadly coils had
entwined,
Like the foul fell clutch of a serpent, whose folds no
force can unwind.

3.

Like a vampire it seized on its throat; it was sucking
away its life,
But a few minutes more and ended had been the unequal
strife.

4.

Already its face was purpling—feebly it gasped for
breath—
Each moan and faint struggle betokened—it was nighing
the portals of death.

5.

Science had done its utmost—exhausted nigh all its lore,
The riper wisdom of later times—the skill of the medicine of yore.

6.

One remedy only was left, dangerous, desp'rate, supreme,
But that who would care to employ—a child's waning life to redeem.

7.

For no life was it rare and precious—full of promise of use to man,
But a poor frail flickering life, death-boding as soon as began.

8.

No life like that English monarch's—wounded by poisoned darts,
Whom his wife's loving lips unvenomed—to the joy of all English hearts.

9.

Who dared that extremest resource, cheaply should hold his life,
Meet were it he should be free from the ties of children and wife.

10.

In the poison-constricted throat, he must needs an
incision make,
And forcefully into his own healthy lips, the deadly
venom must take.

11.

“Mere suction of death by blood-poison”—the worldling
would haply have said,
And all for a child, that it reck'd not whether 'twere
living or dead.

12.

But no thought knew the noble Rabbeth of halting fear
or doubt,
Content could his best effort or skill put death's grim
forces to rout.

13.

Imbued with devotion to Science—a love even “stronger
than death,”
And willing to aid its extension by yielding, if need were,
his breath—

14.

Imbued no less with the spirit of self-abnegation divine,
Of man's supreme adoration the greatest and purest
shrine—

15.

He cut into the poisonous membrane—this hero so
nobly rash,
And sucked the malignant venom at the lips of the
blood-red gash.

16.

Saved for the time was the child—the black wings of the
angel of death
Slowly uplifted, and left it inhaling re-vitalized breath.

17.

But the dark-winged angel next hovered—to all men's
grief and dismay,
Over the noble Rabbeth, as though fierce for the loss of
its prey.

18.

He had sucked, alas, into his life's-blood the venom's
malignant powers,
And survived his heroic deed, by but a few suffering
hours.

19.

“Life rendered for life,” and how nobly—with what
generous impulse and free,
No pausing to ask if the child were as worthy of living
h e.

20.

Yet was he skilful and learned—helpful to science and
man,
With such ripeness unworthy compare, were a life only
just began.

21.

What genuine Christian courage—what noble abandon
of self!
What lofty disdain of the Ethic that metes daring service
by self.

* * * * *

22.

Sometimes it is urged how Science of all Religion seems
reft,
How void of all loftier motives to Duty its vot'ries are left.

23.

But as long as heroes like Rabbeth their lives are ready
to yield,
Battling with death and disease, like the brave on the
blood-stained field ;

24.

So long may Science well claim a religious power and
creed,
Brave, and unselfish, and holy, and in spirit Christian
indeed.

25.

For may it not claim the glory of bartering gain for loss,
And displaying by Science-devotion, the lesson that
speaks from the cross?

26.

To such heroes all life is sacred, by none is it thought or
said,
Valueless is the poor child's life that ebbs on a hospital
bed.

27.

To them all Duty is binding—her ties are knit closer
than life,
Her noble behests must be heeded, with however great
risks they are rife.

28.

Thus not for a child's life only did this hero his own
resign,
But for man's highest life which must ever be offered at
Duty's shrine.

*LEGEND OF ST. KNIGHTON'S CHAPEL
AND KEIVE* NEAR TINTAGEL.*

I.

FAIRER spot could be chosen by no man alive,
Whereupon a hermit might build his cell
And, withdrawn from the world, elect to dwell
Than the rocks near the fall of St. Knighton's keive.

2.

So deemèd the saint when long ages ago
He stood on the mossy rocks laved by the stream,
And noted its waters surge and gleam
As their path they forced to the ocean below.

3.

An unknown saint—but no less of worth,
Pious musings and orisons filled his time—
A lonely life—but in grandeur sublime
As there be but few such lives upon earth.

* Waterfall in a rocky basin.

4.

Who St. Knighton was, or whence he came,
None knew that were living when he was alive,
They only knew—on the rocks by the keive
He had built his cell—that was all his fame.

5.

Nay, not quite all—it was known as well
His prayer aye ascended for those at sea
Who in storm-stress or danger chanced to be ;
And his “ hours ” were toll’d on a silver bell.

6.

And though from the land the cell was unseen,
So deep was it bower’d in the wooded dell,
Yet those on the sea might discern it well
“ St. Knighton’s chapel ”—and what it should mean.

7.

To such sea-farers, too, sweetly borne on the air,
’Mid the roar of the surf and the keive near his cell
Came the silvery ring of St. Knighton’s bell,
As the saint tolled forth his call to prayer.

8.

The silver tones sounded from off the shore,
Above, yet half-drowned, by the waterfall’s noise ;
True hermit-music—the still small voice
Of Religion heard ’mid the world’s wild roar.

9.

Of the years he lived, or the thoughts he mused
In his lonely cell by the roaring keive,
Of the penitents whom he was wont to shrive,
Of his words of hope to the spirit-bruised,

10.

No record is left—the revolving years,
Which the dell's wild beauty could not efface,
Nor the walls of his cell—have left no trace
Of the saint and his story—his labours and tears.

11.

Alone with his thought in that sheltered nook
Where, withdrawn from the wind that sweeps bare the
height,
Nature blossoms afresh and in green delight
With bush, tree, and fern, lines the path of the brook.

12.

Fair symbol of growths in feeling and thought,
Mind-culture best gained from the world apart—
Of the fruitfuller brain and wealthier heart
That by converse with Nature and God are wrought.

13.

Emblem, too, of man's life, as if writ in a book,
Of its turbulent rush towards eternity;
Was the stream that coursed down and was lost in the
sea,
And which roared in the keive—his own restless brook.

14.

No lack then of thoughts befitting his life,
As well as the site and bare walls of his cell ;
Of his wild surroundings might each one tell
The spot with hermit-suggestion was rife.

15.

Few changes chequered St. Knighton's lot,
As he mused in his cell by the roaring cascade—
Spring, summer, and fall, each its own hue made,
Of the verduring growths in that sheltered spot.

16.

The sun's shadow cast with e'er varying slope
By the rocks and trees that environ'd his cell,
The stars changing aspects—these minded him well
How time was aye meting his earth-life's scope.

17.

Thus he livèd long years in his cell alone,
In the rocky rift overlooking the sea ;
And the life he thus lived so lonesomely
He in like manner ended, unfriended, unknown.

18.

And e'en now the rude walls of his roofless cell,
Themselves perhaps built by St. Knighton's hand,
With lichens and mosses well tapestried, stand,
Nature's evergreen mantle thrown over the shell

19.

Of her hermit's abode—for he loved her well,
Her grandeur, her beauty, her soothing charm,
Who withdrew from the roar of the world and its harm
In peaceful seclusion with her to dwell.

20.

And long as those moss-covered walls by the kieve,
With their anchorite meanings simple and grand,
Continue in picturesque beauty to stand,
So long will they keep the saint's fame alive.

21.

A fitter memorial no hermit could share,
His devotion to Nature and solitude ;
To bequeath to men—than those ruins rude,
St. Knighton's cell and his house of prayer.

*THE LEGEND OF ST. GOWAN'S BELL.**

I.

'Twas the gloaming grey of a bright summer day,
'Neath the waves had the sun gone down,
And soft was the tone of their rock-lapping moan
Where St. Gowan's cliffs grimly frown.

2.

In the dark sea's face each star seemed to trace
Its image in rays of light,
As if those in the sea with heaven's stars did agree
To doubly dispel the night.

3.

But the star-spangled wave soon a new wonder gave,
For a pirate ship neared the shore,
And its boat was sent with unholy intent
To its crimes to add one more.

4.

The skiff drew to land on the rock-strewn strand
Of the hallowed and peaceful bay,
Where St. Gowan we are told in the days of old
Was wont to muse and pray.

* *Notes and Queries*, I. xii. p. 201.

5.

His chapel stood lone amid boulders of stone,
A shrine renowned far and wide,
Holy symbol of rest and peace on the breast
Of the cliff far above the tide.

6.

A bell silver-pure was the sole wealth lure
Possessed by the lonely shrine,
Which the saint used to toll as a solemn prayer-call
For wanderers on the brine.

7.

And in storms since his death, so the old legend saith,
Its tones all uncaused by hand,
'Mid the storm-wind's roar and the surf on the shore
Pealed far over sea and land.

8.

On the pirating skiff drew to shore 'neath the cliff
And landed its impious crew,
Who with greed so fell climbed the rocks and the bell
From its sacred abode withdrew.

9.

Their plunder they bore to their boat on the shore,
And essayed to their ship to row,
When a storm sudden blew which the boat overthrew
And all sank in the depths below.

10.

But the saint's silver bell, so traditions still tell,
On the new-risen waters rode ;
To the shore returned, and became as inurned
In a rock near its old abode.

11.

And whenever that rock by chance is struck,
Then is heard the soft silvery tone
Of St. Gowan's bell, as though minded to tell
Its entombing with plaintive moan.

12.

For the dull muffled ring of its sweet dong-ding,
Struck forth from its rocky tomb,
Are but echoes dim of its vibrating rim,
As it swung in its old turret home.

13.

Alas! on this earth of such haps we've no dearth,
Nor St. Gowan's is the case alone,
That a sweet silver bell with its God-given spell
Is immured in senseless stone.

"PREPARING FOR HER BERRIN'."

A DEVONSHIRE WIDOWER'S STORY.

Ay, I can mind it well, 'twur just vore death stole her
from me,

Not as I thought her wur dyin', vor no zign o' death
could I zee.

Her had always bin weak and frail, though never a
grumble or moan

Could kill the sweet smile on her lips, as wur carved
there as if in stoan.

We'd bin married nigh thirty year, and she'd bin so good
a wife

That them wur the happiest years I'd spent i' the whole
o' my life ;

And now I be weary and zad, for no children we had
and I

Do zeemas there's nort to live vor, zo I too might just
as well die.

'Twur two days avore her died. Her wur cleaning the
parlour grate,

And I hap'd to come in and zeed her, her zeem'd in an
ailing state,

Her veace wur zo deadly white, her hands zo pale and
thin,
And her breath wur breathed zo heavily out, and draw'd
zo heavily in.

"What be ye a doin' o'?" I asked, "and you zo weak
and bad?"

"I'll tell ye," her zaid with a smile, "though I vear as
'twull make ye zad.

I be cleaning things up for my berrin', I wouldn't like
volks to zee

As I'd left the place all to a litter, when they come to
berrin' o' me."

"A berrin' o' thee," I laughed, "why thee artn't dead as
yet,

And thee'lt live long after I, that a hundred pounds
I'd bet—

I mean if I'd got the money, zo what use is it telling
such stuff;

Being bad for zo many years, only makes volk get more
tough."

But says she, and her looked in my veace, and a tear
come in each eye,

As she put up her hand to her zide, "I knows as I
shall die

In a few more hours or days. There's a zummat as
I veels here,

That tells me it won't be long first, avore thee'lt be lying
bier." *

* "Lying bier" is the North Devon vernacular for being placed
in a coffin.

Well, I laughed again, cos I wanted to put the thing out
 o’ her head,
 Though I didn’t much like her serious way or the words
 that she had said ;
 Ye zee her wur one o’ them zort, whatever her zaid her
 meant,
 So if her zaid her should die, on dying, her must have
 been bent.

But her look’d zo determined about it, that I durstn’t
 laugh no more,
 But I caught up my hat in a hurry and out I went at the
 door ;
 I didn’t want her to zee that, though I laughed at her
 tale,
 My eyes were blinded with tears, and the beat o’ my
 heart zeem’d to fail.

But just as her zaid, zo somehow, it all com’d ezackly
 about,
 Though however her got to know it, I never could no
 ways vind out,
 In two more days her wur gone, and the last chore * her
 done here,
 Wur to put the place straight for the time when her
 would be lyng beir.

* *Chore* is the common old English term for a household duty or task, still used in the western counties, and likely to be preserved elsewhere in its compound *char-woman*.

So when the volk come to her berrin', and zeed the place
so straight,
For scrubb'd wur all the rooms, and blackened wur every
grate :
Then I up and told 'em all what had passed between me
and my wife,
And how to clean up for her berrin' wur the last chore
her done in her life.

THE END.

APPENDIX.

DEVONSHIRE RURAL APOLOGETICS, I.

A DEVONSHIRE WIDOW'S SPECULATIONS ON A FUTURE WORLD.

I wonder where Jan is to now, 'tis a mizmaze I can't
make out,

I do zeem as the world's turned upzide down, now the
old man's no longer about.

I often vancy I hears his voice, I've heer'd 'un again and
again

In the stable or shippen, cart-linhay or barn, a-telling
aloud to the men.

In the night, too, I zeem to veel 'un as he used to lie
by my zide,

I can hear 'im breath heavy, he always did, long avore he
sickened and died ;

I suppose I must be a-dreaming of the days that be past
and gone,

And my dreams be changed like everything else since the
day as I buried Jan.

And where's the old man to now I wonder, I knows
where his body is to,

'Cos I zeed 'un put in thik cold clay grave, underneath
the old churchyard yew.

O God, what a trial thik there wur, of its pain shall I
ever be rid ?

I zeemed I could zee his pale dead veace right through
the oak coffin lid.

But wherever is his soul ago? Passun zays that can never
die ;

'Tis that as makes me grieve and fret, and brings the tear
to my eye.

I zeem I could better bear my trial if I knew as his sins
wur vorgiven,

That God A'mighty had changed his heart, and taken un
home to heaven.

'Twas diff'rent when poor Lizzie died—she wur our ony
child,

Her zeem'd most made a purpus vor heaven, so gentle
her was and mild,

And couldn't her zing? well there, her's gone, where angels
vor ever zings ;

Her might a bin a angel herself if her'd only a pair o'
wings.

Passun zays as heaven's a place where volk got nort to do :
'Cept zinging o' hymns and such like, but music's the gift
o' few ;

Jan didn't care vor no singing, and 'twur seldom he'd
zay a prayer,

And I cannot think, if he's gone to heaven, whatever he'll
vind to do there.

It zeems all such a mizmaze, what it means I shall never
sense.

Us meets with dark enough puzzles here and they'm
darker when us goes hence ;

I hope to vind God's mercy at last, and to go to heaven
when I die,

But how to get there and what I shall do, God only knows,
not I.

There's one thing I could never do, I never could zing
a note,

I tried to often when I wur a child, but I only hurted my
throat ;

I could zay my prayers, that's true, as I zays when I goes
to bed,

And God Almighty—as I can't zing—may accept my
prayers instead.

But there's one good thing we'm told about heaven, and
it's that I likes the best—

We'm told in the Bible as 'tis the place where weary volk
vind rest,

And that zeems good and sensible like; volk do get tired
o' life,

Tired to death o' its work and worry, its troubles, its
crosses and strife.

I have felt it many's the time—the veeling of being
dead-beat,

The zort of veeling a harvester hath, that have worked all
day in the heat ;

And I've sometimes zaid : " O how I do wish 'twur God's
will as I wur dead,
That I might sleep and forget it all, as I do when I go to
bed " .

Well, Passun he come to Jan and prayed, and zaid as
he must repent,
And ask God Almighty vor pardon avore that his time
wur spent ;
But Jan wur always a stubborn man, and terrible hard
to turn,
And I zeed as the Passun's lesson wur one as he didn't
much care to learn .

And yet I believe he did repent, 'cos the night avore he
died
I wur zot behind the curtain'd bed, and in silence I
sobb'd and cried,
And he call'd me vore, and I zeed at once he'd a new
zoft look in's veace,
It minded me o' his coortin' looks—o' thik sunshine it
zeem'd a trace.

And he says, says he :—" I be terrible veared as I hav'nt
led a good life,
And I hav'nt been kind as I ought to have been, to you
my own dear wife ;
But there, dear Jenny, I 'zure ye, I didn't mean to be bad,
And I didn't think it wrong to vally the things I'd hoarded
and had.

.

“ Breeding bullocks wur all I cared vor, but Lord ! what’s
the use o’t now,
When one good veeling or penitent thought’s worth more
than a short-horned cow?
How proud I wur o’ my short-horns, such bullocks you’d
not often zee,
I mean all chosen and bred and fed, by a poor working
varmer like me.

“ Stock-breeding and money-raping, in they things I
alone took delight,
They villed every day my head and heart, and robbed me
o’ sleep at night ;
I didn’t zeem at that time I could mind ’em half enough,
But there, I don’t vally ’em now, I med zay, not as
much as a pinch o’ snuff.

“ Volk used to tell me like you did, that money’s the root
of all ill,
But vor that not a pin did I care, zo of gold I could have
my vill ;
What could us do without money? wur the question I
asked then ;
But when death comes, ’tis wonderful how it changes the
’pinions o’ men.

“ For gold, I zee it all plainly now—though well enough in
its way,
When loved too much zeems to get inzide, and makes a
man cold as clay ;

It takes away all one's veeling of what's kindly and true
and right,
And withers one's heart completely up—as I've zeed corn
wither'd by blight.

“I'm leaving ye pretty well off, my dear, there's just
that much to be zaid,
Ye'll have no call to work or starve, after that I be dead ;
But then that might have bin managed with less o' pinch-
ing and care,
With not zo much grinding o' poor volks' veaces and living
on scanty fare.

“If I could but have my time over, I'd lead a different
life,
In godly peace and not in a thicket o' worldly bustle and
strife ;
I've bin letting myself grow fallow, while tilling my
ground and my purse ;
Zo the things that might have been blessings to me, I have
changed each one to a curse.

“I wonder if I shall zee our Liz in the place where I be
a-going,
And if I do, shall I know her again? I s'pose there is no
knowing ;
If her's in heaven I doubt whether I be fit to come there
or not,
The difference between us wur zummat like a glass vase
and an iron pot.

“ Well, I shall zoon know all about it ; ’twill zoon be over
with me,
Already my eyesight be almost gone ; thy dear veace I
can hardly zee ;
Good-bye, dear Jenny, God bless ye, and give me His
pardon and grace,
And bring us together again zome day in a brighter and
better pleace.”

Them wur my dear Jan’s very last words, exactly as I’ve
now zaid,
And then he zeemed to sleep right off, and in a few hours
wur dead ;
And now he and Lizzie be gone avore, and I be left all
alone,
’Tis time, I zeem, if ’twur God’s will, I too should pack
up and be gone.

DEVONSHIRE RURAL APOLOGETICS, II.

THE DEVONSHIRE WIDOWER; OR, THE SELFISH- NESS OF GRIEF.

HP. *τί δ'αν προκόπτους, εἰ θέλεις ἀεὶ στένειν*

ΑΛ. *ἔγνωκα κἀυτὸς, ἀλλ' ἔρωσ τίς μ' ἐξάγει.*

EURIP., ALCESTIS.—1079-80.

Volks tells me as I be zelvish to zorrow vor them that be
gone,
They zay as I should be content that heaven's own will
wur done,
That I should think less o' myzelf, and more of their
gain that's dead;
But to all that there's another zide, however true it be
zaid.

I cannot think as it's zelvish, to be longing once more to
zee
Them who for all my life-time lived zo close to my
heart and me;
'Tisn't as if I wanted nort, as they could do me o' good,
I've always bin uzed to shift vor myzelf, and to get my
daily vood.

I don't think as it's zelvish to want zome way to tell
The dear ones I have buried that howzoever I loved
them well;

I didn't love them while they lived zo hearty as I'd ought,
And this veeling now they'm gone vor good's a zad and
bitter thought.

'Tisn't zelvish, zo mezeems, to long to have them back
Zo I might, if but vor a moment sate, thik terrible love-
lack ;
That I might assure them what a rent their death have
made in my heart,
And how ready I be, now they'm all gone, this lonesome
life to depart.

What I zays is this, and I'll stand to't, that I can't help
my grief,
And if any one be to blame for't, 'tis God Himself is the
chief ;
'Twur He that gave me thik passionate zense to cling to
them that I love,
Zo yrom Him must have come the heartache when He
took 'em to heaven above.

And though I know they'm better off, I can't zay as I
agree
That they all died contented quite, nor loved heaven
better than we ;
'Twur just avore my dear wife died, her zaid her'd rather
stay,
If 'twur God's will ; I should miss her zo, her wur zure,
when she wur away.

The heathen knew, zo I've often heard, how to 'pologize
 vor a love
 That constrained them with almighty force, they deem'd
 it was from above,
 A divine resistless pressure ($\xi\rho\omega\varsigma$) that men with the gods
 partake,
 And what's more, their own true kinsmen, by such a
 conviction make.

A tie like thik, more masterful, never the old gods wove,
 When human heart to heart wur riveted by gold links
 forged above ;
 Who could either bend or break such chains that $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$
 himself could restrain?
 When the gods themselves would acknowledge such a
 trial made wholly in vain.

'Tis a curious world this of ours methinks, where lives and
 loves be entwined
 So close, that if one half be taken 'tis death to that left
 behind,
 And where we'm told to love zo well as if breathing the
 zelf-zame breath,
 But when zuch love to ripeness grows, 'tis zundered zo
 often by death.

I hope as God will pardon me, if I zeem ort that's amiss,
 But the world would be better to live in on zome other
 plan zuch as this,
 That when two lives be tied zo close, that they cannot
 bide apart,
 The death that steals away the one, should at once break
 the other's heart.

IN MEMORIAM—ROBERT BROWNING.

Dedicated respectfully to the Browning Society, by the President of which, Dr. Furnival, it was duly and gratefully acknowledged.

Grim Harvester, Death, thou hast gathered in the curve
of thy sickle keen
A ripe shock of mellowest corn—fair fruitage for centuries
to glean ;
But though golden and ripe for the reaper, we grudge
such a harvest of worth,
In its fulness of aureate splendour, should be lost to
man's vision on earth.

In fruition of years and of glory hath passed to his rest
the Seer,
Whose inwardly-piercing vision, through man's universe
rangèd clear,
Whose oracles pregnant and strong—as a Hebrew
prophet's of old—
New glimpses of truth aye reveal'd to eyes gifted with
sense to behold.

We mourn for the thinker whose thought disdained the
mean level of men,
Sounding down to hid depths of their being, soaring up-
ward beyond their ken,

Threading with insight unerring—the Seer-spirit's intuitive
force—

Each subtle and devious bye-path of man's life's laby-
rinthine course.

With lute still attuned and voiceful, the hand from its
strings that woke

With masterly skill new beauties by each music-sensitive
stroke,

Lies numb'd in death, and the tongue whose tones were
so pure and strong

Is hushed, and will never more 'rapture our souls with its
magical song.

A blank drear stillness thus presses, where resonant
music—voic'd

To man's deepest thought and his sorrow, bringing solace
or strength that rejoiced—

Lately 'livened our ears—and we, by the long-shared
silence grown dumb,

In voiceless sympathy wail our song-bereaved years yet
to come.

Sons of the dead Prophet, we mourn the orphaning doom
we have met,

We grieve that one Seer less remains to chide human
folly and fret,

That a Star of rare brilliance and guidance is gone from
our human sky,

And the Dark of man's world has grown denser for every
discerning eye.

Yet may we still warm in the sun,—though its orb we,
 with boding unrest,
 Have watchèd in sunset glory sink in the gold clouds of
 the West,—
 Thoughts that the world may have chill'd in the depths of
 its frozen night—
 True feelings that Self may have blunted, as a flower is
 stunted with blight.

“Stored Sunshine” we hold in his writings, *packed*
 daintily for our joy,
 As men store the soul of the Lightning, and its force and
 its radiance employ ;
 The sunlight condensed in his pages, that should make
 men enlightened and free,
 Will, long as our language is spoken, give strength to our
 children to be.

True, we who rejoiced in his presence, in the light of his
 winsome smile,
 We, of our sorrows and doubts whose word-witchery
 served to beguile,
 We, in our night of bereavement, must endure its lack
 and its pain ;
 The sweet sentience of Love, death-smitten, on earth
 revives never again.

TO THE FUTURE WORLD.

Dark World ! I ask not if thou be,
Thy Being or non-Being frets not me ;
I would not lift—if so I might,
The curtain that enshrouds thy night.

For grant *thou art*—that could not change
Stern duty's sphere—in Earth-life's range,
Still must I work, learn, think, and say,
As now I do, from day to day.

Grant *thou art not* ; yet must I still
One round with Man, Life, Thought fulfil ;
With these, their Life-course done—I must
In death commingle—dust to dust.

The flower that grows, matures, and dies,
One moment brightening living eyes,
Demands no more of Life, Time, Bloom
And Space, than Earth allots it room.

Goodness is great, Truth still bides true,
Though Earth-things 'scape man's Earth-born view,
Eternal Time claims this one day,
Though Heaven and Earth both pass away.

Content am I—my Here-life be
Worthy of Immortality ;
Yet, careless somewhat—if its lot
Be *that*, or death-still'd and forgot.

Content—as by high wisdom plann'd,
This Earth-to Heaven-life to expand,
Or else this Life itself to guard
As its sole duty, worth, reward.

THE PHILOSOPHER'S BED.

'Comme on fait sa Philosophie, on se couche.'

VICTOR HUGO: *Les Miserables*.

"Just as a thinker makes his Philosophy, he must rest thereon."

The thinker moulds his thought
Just as, in homely phrase, he makes his bed,
From every source well brought
He well adjusts with choice unlimited,
Except by clearest Truth, by taste and skill,
As whoso must Life's noblest task fulfil.

'Tis that on which his rest,
For all his after life, he needs must take,
The pillow whereon best
His restless brain must restful sleep partake,
Must lean at least so much on Thought-content,
And Peace as on such gain is truly spent.

Beyond his minèd Thought—
Howe'er he might all-avidly explore—
Beyond what is well-smelted, stamp'd, and wrought—
The treas'ry fair of Truth's well-minted store—
He dare not pass: there must he make his stay
And traffic therewithal from day to day.

At least, 'twill be his own,
The cultured *outcome* of life's term of years,
Work that with Thought has grown,
The hard-won Rest of many doubts and tears,
To no man else beholden—all alone,
The Man, the Thinker, Thought—ALL BEING BUT ONE.

M. RENAN'S FAREWELL TO HIS CHILD-
HOOD'S GOD.

" O Dieu de ma jeunesse, j'ai longtemps espéré revenir a toi enseignes déployées et avec la fierte de la raison, et peut-être te reviendrai-je humble et vaincu comme une faible femme. Autrefois tu m'écoutais ; j'espérais voir quelque jour ton visage ; car je t'entendais répondre à ma voix. . . . Mais non, il n'y a que l'inflexible Nature : quand je cherche ton oeil de père, je ne trouve que l'orbite vide et sans fond de l'Infini. . . . Adieu donc O Dieu de ma jeunesse ! Peut-être seras tu celui de mon lit de mort. Adieu quoique tu m'ais trompé, je t'aime encore ! "

My childhood's God, farewell !
As one who from some dream of witchery wakes,
Nor more its glamour for the Truth mistakes,
Freed am I from Thy spell.

To Thee—a wistful child—
My budding powers were all in turn subdued,
Thy magic pressures, day by day renewed,
The deeper me beguiled.

Methought I heard Thy voice
In organ tones or quired minstrelsy,
In bird-song, whisp'ring winds, or murm'ring sea—
Descants divinely choice.

Thy presence, too, seemed near
Unto my childhood's fancy—eager keen
To feign fit shrines wherein Thou mightst be seen,
And seen—e'er grow more dear.

With all my youthful love
And reverential rapture wert Thou blent ;
Sweet ties of home and kin gave more content
With ties knit from above.

Now larger culture flows
In greater volume through life's broadening stream ;
The narrower life that with Thy thought did teem,
My thought no longer knows.

NATURE and TIME and SPACE,
Dread Infinities, begot of chaos dim,
Of pity void, stone deaf to prayer and hymn,
Fill now Thy vacant place.

But NATURE, too, is fair,
Time hath its records that enthral man's thought,
And Space and cosmic energies are wrought
To themes nor small nor rare.

Now in this boundless shrine
By man unspaced, untimed, I meekly bow
My head in silent worship where both Thou
Art lost, and what was Thine.

Yet with life's latest hour
Thou mayst steal back and o'er my death hold sway,
As Thou didst o'er my birth and childhood's day
Rule with seductive power.

Farewell! God of my youth,
Warmly I cherish Thy fond mem'ries left,
Though for the time of Thee I be bereft :—
Dire sacrifice to Truth.

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